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The Lure of Whiteness and the Politics of "Otherness":

Mexican American Racial Identity

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The Lure of Whiteness and the Politics of "Otherness":

Mexican American Racial Identity

by

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For my family

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The Lure of Whiteness and the Politics of "Otherness":

Mexican American Racial Identity

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Using a "constructed ethnicity" (Nagel 1994) approach, this project employs multiple methods to explore the racial identification of Mexican Americans. The U.S. Census has grappled with appropriate strategies for identifying the Mexican-ancestry population for over a century, including the use of a "Mexican" racial category in 1930. I examine historical documents pertaining to the 1930 Census and the development of the "Mexican" racial classification, as well as how Mexican Americans in the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) constructed "White" racial identities in their

efforts to resist such racialization. I then explore contemporary Mexican American identity as reflected in current racial self-reporting on the U.S. Census. Finally, I conduct fifty-two in-depth interviews with a strategic sample of Mexican Americans in five Texas cities, investigating how such factors as socioeconomic status, racial composition of neighborhood, proximity to the U.S.-Mexico border, social networks, nativity/migration history, Spanish language fluency, physical appearance, and political attitudes affect their racial and ethnic identifications. Results indicate a complex relationship between personal histories and local community constructions of identity that influences racial identification.

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Chapter 1: Latinos and the Question of Race

Introduction

The roots of this dissertation can be traced to a qualitative study I began as an undergraduate, interviewing persons of "biracial" mixed Mexican-Anglo heritage like myself. During the course of this research that became the basis for my master's thesis, I discovered that according to the U.S. Census, Latinos are not a racial group. This did not fit my experience growing up in Texas where I found myself torn between two different worlds, one white and one brown.

This disjuncture between government classification and self-identification, between federal definitions and regional definitions of race, is at the heart of my project. The goal of this dissertation is to explore the historical roots of the census classification of Mexican Americans as "White," and to examine who rejects this classification, identifying as "Other" race. Are there significant differences between these groups? What factors play into how Mexican Americans label themselves? And what are the meanings of these labels?

The most common "other race" response given on the racial identification question of the 1990 U.S. Census was a Hispanic identifier—Hispanic, Latino or a nationality such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban (U.S. General Accounting Office 1993). While approximately 51% of Mexican Americans in the 1990 census identified as "White" on the racial identity question, an almost equal proportion (47%) identified as "Other." In 2000, the numbers were similar with 48% of Mexican Americans identifying as "White" and 46% as "Other." It is clear that a substantial number of Mexican

Americans view themselves as a racial group outside of the current census classifications of White, Black, Native American, and Asian American.

The U.S. Census has grappled with appropriate strategies for enumerating the Mexican-ancestry population for over a century. Questions regarding foreign birth or foreign parentage were introduced in 1850, followed by a foreign language usage question that was instituted in 1890 (Kiplinger 1978, Chapa 2000). A "Mexican" racial category was added in the 1930 Census. However, the "Mexican" racial category was no longer used following the 1930 Census due to vigorous opposition from the League of United Latin American Citizens, an group of middle-class Mexican Americans who argued that people of Mexican-ancestry were "White," as well as protest from the Mexican government (Kiplinger 1978, Foley 1998). In 1950, a question regarding Spanish surname was added to the census; the question was only asked of those who resided in the Southwest (Kiplinger 1978). And in 1970, a Hispanic ethnicity question, separate from the race question, was introduced on the census. However, the question was only asked on the census "long form," an extended questionnaire that does not go out to all households participating in the census (Chapa 2000). Finally, in 1980 the "Hispanic" ethnicity question was asked on all census questionnaires (Chapa 2000).

Forty percent of those who indicated that they were Hispanic on the 1980 census, checked the "other race" box on the race question (Rodriguez 1992). The Census Bureau hypothesized that this was because Hispanics were confused or had somehow misunderstood the question. Some have suggested that the construction of the question in the 1980 census was ambiguous. It was worded, "Is this person?" followed by a list of

possible groups (including answers like “Chinese” and “Alaskan Native”), which some argue may have left the question open to more nationality, or regional affiliations (Tienda and Ortiz 1986). Clara Rodriguez investigated these possible explanations, interviewing Latinos on the east coast (Rodriguez 1992). Rodriguez’ findings did not support the hypothesis that Latinos had misunderstood the question. Rather, interviews with her mostly Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Ecuadorian sample, revealed an understanding of race as “cultural, social, and/or political concept” that differs from the largely biological mainstream US conception of race (Rodriguez 1992). Rodriguez has continued this line of research. Exploring 1990 census data in her recent publication, *Changing Race* (2000), she further examines this issue of Latino racial identity.

But somehow this very critical issue in U.S. racial studies remains somewhat below the radar of many race/ethnicity scholars. I believe part of this is due to misinformation regarding the racial identity of Latinos in these government surveys. For example, in a recent Population Reference Bureau report, race and census scholar Sharon Lee writes: “The 1990 census data and more recent estimates from the Current Population Surveys show that 90 percent of people who report Hispanic origin report their race, or are categorized, as White. Recently released data from the 2000 census report that 48 percent of Hispanics report their race as white only and 42 percent as ‘some other race’ only (Lee 2001, pp.8-9).” Lee goes on to hypothesize that the differences between the 1990 and 2000 census data may be the result of different wording in the questions. While her comments about Current Population Survey (CPS) are correct, they are not true of the 1990 census where 51% of Latinos identified as “White” (Rodriguez

2000). The crucial difference is that in the CPS, the interviewer codes the race of the respondent, while the census requires self-identification. Somehow the lack of attention to this difference between self-identification, and identification by the government has led to a misconception among some scholars that the overwhelming majority of Latinos consider themselves racially "White." What are the effects of this "whitening" of Mexican Americans and other Latinos on perceptions of assimilation and upward mobility? Even though Mexican Americans fall far behind non-Hispanic Whites on nearly every indicator of socio-economic status, from income to educational attainment, and employment opportunities, some scholars read the "whiteness" of Latinos on the census as evidence of the full assimilation of Latinos.

In a 2001 New York Times article, sociologist Orlando Patterson argued that Latinos should not really be considered a "minority" group comparable to African Americans. He uses the new 2000 census numbers to back his claim that "nearly half of the Hispanic population is white in every social sense of this term" (Patterson 2001). Patterson compares the increasing rates of intermarriage between Latinos and non-Hispanic Whites to the intermarriage rates of the earlier European immigrants to the United States. It is true that about 17% of Latinos marry someone who is not Latino (just over three times the percentage of African Americans who outmarry), and that most of these marriages are to Anglos (Suro 1999). But, considering the long-term presence of Mexican Americans on this landscape (longer than some of those European immigrants presented by Patterson), it seems historically unwarranted to say the outmarriage rates are similar to European Americans, particularly when 83% of Latinos are still marrying

endogamously. But still this begs the question, with continued intermarriage, will Latinos be "whitening?" If some Latinos are, what are the characteristics of those who are not?

According to the recent 2000 Census, Latinos are the nation's fastest growing minority population, now even surpassing the African Americans. Furthermore, Mexican Americans comprise approximately two-thirds of the Latino population (Guzman 2001). Considering the rapid growth of the Mexican-ancestry population, and continued Mexican immigration, the future of Mexican American racial identity is of utmost importance to the study of race/ethnicity in the U.S. The goal of this dissertation is to explore the historical roots of the census classification of Mexican Americans as "White," and to examine who rejects this classification, identifying as "Other" race. Are there significant differences between these groups? What factors play into how Mexican Americans label themselves?

I examine historical documents pertaining to the 1930 Census and the development of the "Mexican" racial classification, and explore how Mexican Americans in the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), who lobbied against this racialized identity on the census, constructed "White" identities. I further investigate this issue of Mexican American identity by exploring how Mexican Americans currently identify themselves racially on the census. Finally, I conduct in-depth interviews with Mexican Americans, investigating the role of multiple factors such as socio-economic status, nativity/migration history, and physical appearance on their racial and ethnic identities.

Previous Research on Latino Racial Identity

Theories of Race/Ethnicity Identity

Assimilation and Segmented Assimilation Models. The traditional assimilation or acculturation hypothesis suggests that as ethnic groups assimilate into the mainstream Anglo culture, they become "White" losing their specific cultural heritage. In this model, assimilation is associated with higher socio-economic status as these minority groups acculturate. The final stage of this Anglo-conformity model is intermarriage with the dominant group (Gordon 1964).

But, while earlier immigration to the U.S. was primarily from white European countries, 77% of post-1960 are from counties outside of Europe. Since 1960, the racial composition of immigrants to the US has been: 22.4% Asian, 7.6% Black (non-Hispanic), and 47% Hispanic (Portes and Zhou 1993). These shifts in the racial and cultural composition of these newer immigrants have led researchers to pose the question: How will assimilation differ for these groups compare to the European immigrants of the past? Gordon's assimilation model implies a process resulting in higher socioeconomic status as minority groups reach fixed acculturated identities (Gordon 1964). However, a history of colonization, slavery, and racism against immigrants of color has created massive inequality between racial/ethnic minorities and non-Hispanic Whites in the US (Takaki 1993, Haney Lopez 1996). Thus, newer immigrants who may be unable to assimilate into the dominant Anglo culture are left with options to align themselves with U.S.

minorities who may have a counter-cultural existence marginalized by mainstream America, or to maintain strong adherence to there own immigrant communities.

Portes and Zhou (1993) examined this issue that they termed "segmented assimilation." They suggest three things influence the "segment" into which immigrants assimilate: color, location (proximity to U.S. minority population), and absence of social mobility (presence of economic niches). For example, Mary Waters' work on black immigrants from English-speaking Caribbean islands reveals that these immigrants, who often reside in urban areas with large African American communities, find it difficult to maintain an ethnic or national identification, when categorized by Whites as simply "Black" (Waters 1999). Many of these immigrants wished to distance themselves from African Americans because of both their own negative perceptions of African Americans and fear of Whites mistaking them for African Americans; however, a combination of color and proximity to this minority community creates this constraint on their identification.

This issue of segmented assimilation has been studied among Mexican Americans as well. Matute-Bianchi (1986) examined school performance of Mexican recent arrivals, Mexican Americans (born in Mexico, but immigrated within the last 5 years), and Chicanos (U.S.-born of Mexican ancestry). The immigrant groups both performed better in school and were evaluated more favorably by teachers. Teachers had higher opinions of both immigrant groups than of Chicanos, who were viewed as "oppositional." (Matute-Bianchi 1986). Further research on assimilation/acculturation among Latino immigrants

suggests that maintaining Spanish language, cultural ties and identification may be linked to better achievement and even better health outcomes (Landale et. al. 1999).

Thus, while one may consider identification as "White" or intermarriage with Anglos to be the end result of assimilation/acculturation, the processes involved may be far more complicated. In line with a tradition assimilation model, higher socio-economic status (income and education) and acculturation should be associated with identification as "White" for Mexican Americans in this study. However, research on the assimilation processes of immigrants of color suggest that a pattern of "segmented assimilation" may occur whereby acculturation translates into a decline in socio-economic status as these immigrants assimilate into disadvantaged U.S. racial minority communities.

Constructing Ethnicity Model. The traditional assimilation model implies a linear process resulting in fixed acculturated identities. But research both on some aspects of segmented assimilation, and on the persistence of ethnic identities suggests that ethnicity is far more fluid and situational (Nagel 1994, Portes and Rumbaut 1996, Omi and Winant 1994, Waters 1990). Ethnic identity is constructed on the basis of interaction with others both within one's ethnic community, as well as experiences with outsiders (Nagel 1994, Omi and Winant 1996). And research on differences by class, nativity, and region suggests very different identities emerge as groups construct identities in dialogue with and often in opposition to each other (Foley 1997, Hurtado, Gurin, and Peng 1994, Gutierrez 1995, Menchaca 1995, Vila 2000, Collins 2001).

Historically, racial minorities have been defined in relation to whiteness. That is, identities have served the purpose of delineating who is "White" and therefore who reaps

the benefits of citizenship, electoral participation, and access to educational and employment opportunities (Haney Lopez 1996, Menchaca 1995, Takaki 1993). For example, Mexican persons living in the Southwest were granted U.S. citizenship through the Treaty of Guadalupe in 1848 when the land was acquired from Mexico. However, citizenship and legal rights were still contingent upon whiteness. Mexican Americans, who were often of racially mixed ancestry (European, Indian, and African), found themselves in an ambiguous category between the "white" and "negro" races. While the courts at times afforded Mexicans the status as "White," this legal classification did not carry over to the general public (Foley 1998). In most venues, Mexican Americans were racialized as "non-White," and this classification served to keep Mexican Americans segregated and relegated to lower-wage employment, poor housing and inferior schools and resources (Montejano 1987, Menchaca 1995, Menchaca 2001, Foley 1997).

Martha Menchaca (1995) describes the concept of "social apartness" as the "system of social control in which Mexican-origin people are expected to interact with Anglo Americans only on Anglo American terms." Her research on Mexican Americans in California examines the ways in which social relations controlled by Anglos marginalize Mexican-ancestry persons. This segregation and control occurs both at an interpersonal level, as well at an institutional level. Racial discrimination in various formal and informal social institutions has contributed to a "racialized" identity for Mexican Americans.

It is important to emphasize that the census has been and continues to play a critical role in the process of "racialization." The census does not merely reflect societal

race relations, but is inextricably linked with the construction of racial identities for various political ends. Identities based on African blood quantum (octoroon, quadroon, and mulatto) and "free or slave" categories for Blacks reinforced racial identities based on both biology and slave status (Anderson 1988, Nobles 2000, Lee 1993). The creation of categories for "Chinese," "Japanese," and "Mexican" were in part the result of increasing xenophobia and a desire to restrict immigration (Anderson 1988). And in perhaps one of the darkest moments in the history of the census, the census was used to locate Japanese Americans for internment camps during World War II (Seltzer and Anderson 2000). In this way, racial/ethnic identities are created and reinforced in dialogue with the political context and power relations of a given time. Because political climates change, and minority groups actively create and resist labels, these identities are mutable—constructed and re-constructed for particular political ends (Nagel 1994, Espiritu 1992, Padilla 1984). But, politics is not the only motivation behind racial/ethnic labels. Persons identify with particular racial/ethnic labels for a number of both institutional and more personal social psychological reasons. These factors influencing identification are discussed in the next section.

Factors Influencing Racial/Ethnic Labeling

There are several factors that have been found to contribute to the construction of racial/ethnic identity. These factors include basic demographic characteristics (such as gender, age), socio-economic characteristics (such as education, income, and occupation), cultural assimilation characteristics (such as nativity/immigration status, socialization,

and language usage), social networks, and phenotype. These factors and key relevant research are outlined below.

Age, Lifecourse, and Cohort. Research regarding age and racial/ethnic identity has explored both changes in ethnic identification throughout the lifecourse, and cohort effects for those who lived through certain historical cultural markers. Waters (1990) found that European Americans in her sample experienced changes in ethnic identification throughout the lifecourse. Ethnicity became more important for her respondents when they changed life circumstances. For example, when young people went away to college, differences between themselves and their peers often served to call up greater identification with ethnic heritage. Ethnic identity became important now that these young people were interacting with a wider range of people from various other backgrounds. Military experience is similar in that it often requires persons to interact with a range of different ethnic groups from both within the U.S. and abroad, leading to solidification of ethnic identities for those who serve in the armed forces. Also, Waters' respondents mentioned stronger affiliation with ethnic identities after they became parents or grandparents, and their thoughts turned to passing on cultural heritage to their children or grandchildren (Waters 1990). Respondents at times even changed ethnic identities based on marriage, taking on the ethnic identification of their spouses. This was particularly true of women who sometime emphasized their husband's ethnicity when socializing children (Waters 1990).

Additionally, Waters found cohort effects in ethnic identification. For example, some respondents who were young adults during World War II indicated misgivings

about identifying with their German heritage (Waters 1990). Research on Latino identification with nationalist identities also suggests lifecourse and cohort effects are important in Latino political identities (Oboler 1995, Sanchez Jankowski 1999). For example, whether or not one lived through the Chicano civil rights movement influenced identification with Chicano nationalist identities (Sanchez Jankowski 1999).

Especially pertinent to this study, Rodriguez (2000) found some evidence suggesting older Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans were more likely to identify as "White." She suggests differences in life experiences, such as length of time since immigration to the U.S. or experiences with pre-civil rights segregation may also influence this racial identification. The effects of age, lifecourse, and cohort draw attention to the ways in which identity shifts dependent upon personal social history, and changes in location or status throughout one's life.

Gender. Pertinent research on gender and racial/ethnic identity has focused on the ways in which the articulation of racial/ethnic identity differs for men and women, as well as how gender of parents influences the identification of children. For example, research on racial determination legal cases from the 19th and early 20th century reveal differences between the ways in which women and men attempted to prove their "whiteness." For men, whiteness was tied into citizenship, and jury or militia participation, while for women, beauty, grace and etiquette served to prove one's whiteness (Gross 1998).

Research on the role of parent's gender on the identification of children after intermarriage has produced conflicting results. Stephan and Stephan (1989) found that persons of mixed ancestry were more likely to identify as Hispanic if their father was

Hispanic. Other work on children of mixed Asian-White intermarriage also supports this pattern of identification by race of the father (Peterson and Goldscheider 1997). However, in contrast, while Dowling (1999) found no distinct pattern by gender of Mexican parent in a sample of persons of mixed Mexican-Anglo heritage, respondents emphasized the role of the mother as the transmitter of culture in the home. One factor that may be influencing this gender effect is the role of surname in identity development. For Latino and Asian intermarriage, the father's last name may reinforce identification with the father's race despite the traditional role of the mother as the transmitter of culture.

Socio-economic Status. Socio-economic status is comprised of three main components: education, income, and occupation. According to a traditional assimilation model, higher education, income, and occupational prestige should be associated with identification as "White." Rodriguez' results do appear to support this hypothesis, suggesting that higher percentages of Puerto Ricans of lower income and educational status identified as "Other" in the 1980 Census (Rodriguez 1991). Also, lower education was associated with identification as "Other" for all Latino groups in the 1990 Census (Rodriguez 2000). However, Rodriguez emphasizes that even among college graduates, a substantial number of Latinos still identify as "Other" (Rodriguez 2000).

Research on socio-economic differences among Mexican Americans suggests sharp distinctions exist between working-class and middle-class persons of Mexican ancestry (Hurtado, Gurin, and Peng 1994, Vila 2000, Richardson 1999). Middle-class Mexican Americans often complain that Anglos lump all persons of Mexican ancestry

together, and conflate race and class, identifying them as working-class simply because they are Mexican American (Richardson 1999, Vila 2000). Class status is often further conflated with nativity. And to combat this, US-born Mexican Americans attempt to distinguish themselves from working-class recent immigrants (Richardson 1999, Gutierrez 1995).

Nativity/Immigration Status. Research on racial/ethnic labels among Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants suggests these groups label differently both in ethnic/racial terms and other personal characteristics (Hurtado, Gurin, and Peng 1994). Mexican immigrants are more likely to accept labels like "Mexican," and "foreigner," while second and third generation persons of Mexican ancestry more likely to label themselves "American." Furthermore, US-born Mexican Americans are more likely to label as middle or working class than Mexican immigrants who more frequently labeled as "blue collar." Immigrants are also more likely to use panethnic labels compared to US-born Mexican Americans (Hurtado, Gurin, and Peng 1994).

In terms of racial identity on the census, Rodriguez found that while a substantial number of US-born Mexican American identified as "Other" on the 1990 Census, this number was lower than the foreign-born Mexican population (Rodriguez 2000). These findings lend some support to the assimilation model, as US-born Mexican-ancestry persons are more likely to label as "White."

Socialization, Family Structure, and Language Usage. Culture is one of the "basic building blocks" of ethnicity (Nagel 1994), and much of the transmission of culture occurs in the home. Mary Waters' work on middle class European Americans found

knowledge of ancestors is an important factor contributing to ethnic identity (Waters 1990). Research on persons of mixed Latino and some other ancestry have shown that knowledge of cultural practices is strongly linked to Hispanic/Latino identity (Stephan and Stephan 1989). However, research on children of mixed Mexican and some other ancestry also suggests that persons may identify very strongly with an ethnic identity even without the presence of Mexican cultural practices in the home (Salgado de Snyder, Lopez, and Padilla 1982, Dowling 1999), and that parental reinforcement of a cultural identification during childhood may not always translate into identification with that heritage in adulthood (Dowling 1999). Other factors such as social networks, and physical appearance may become more important in interactions with others, leading to changes in ethnic identification.

The European Americans in Waters' study were more likely to identify with the ethnic background on which they had the most information. Family structure influenced this in that divorce or separation may leave people without knowledge of the ethnic background of the parent who did not raise them (Waters 1990). However, even despite the absence of a Mexican parent in the home, Dowling (1999) found that some respondents raised by their Anglo parent still identified with their Mexican ancestry. For these respondents, physical appearance and/or racial/ethnic composition of their community led to Mexican identification (Dowling 1999).

Language is an important part of socialization and connection to a cultural community, but it is also one of the first cultural attributes to be lost in assimilation (Stevens and Swicegood 1987). Lack of knowledge of Spanish can create conflicts for

persons of Mexican ancestry who sometimes face criticism from other Mexican Americans, as well as communication barriers because of their lack of Spanish ability (Richardson 1999, Dowling 1999). However, lack of knowledge of Spanish does not necessarily prevent persons from identifying with their Mexican heritage (Salgado de Snyder, Lopez, and Padilla 1982, Dowling 1999).

Language appears to influence racial identification on the census. In line with the assimilation/acculturation model, Rodriguez (2000) found that Mexican Americans who speak only English in the home were less likely to identify as "Other" on the 1990 Census. This may be related to the way in which language serves as an instrument of ethnic cohesion for Mexican American communities. Those who do not speak Spanish may not socialize as much with other Mexican Americans and this may affect social networks.

Racial/Ethnic Composition of Community, Social Networks. Research on the role of community racial/ethnic composition on race/ethnic identity suggests that this factor is very important in identity formation (Portes 1984, Sanchez Jankowski 1999, Richardson 1999). Location near a politically active area, such as Crystal City, Texas during the formation of the Raza Unida Party, for example, may have strong lasting affects on ethnic identity (Sanchez Jankowski 1999). Also, location in an overwhelmingly Mexican-ancestry area can solidify strong racial/ethnic identities (Richardson 1999). Living in close proximity to a large community of co-ethnics can serve to support and reinforce issues of common interest and shared history, as well provide more formal organizations and community centers of support. However, remaining embedded in an ethnic

community may also mean persons do not identify as strongly with ethnic identity. Without some other racial/ethnic group for comparative purposes, racial/ethnic identity may seem less important.

For example, research on identity formation suggests location within an ethnic enclave may not foster as salient an ethnic identity as is formed through interaction with other racial/ethnic groups outside the enclave (Portes 1984). Portes' work on Cuban identity reveals that identification is strengthened for Cuban Americans who leave Miami, as they compete with Anglos and other racial/ethnic minority groups (Portes 1984). Research on mixed-race persons of Mexican ancestry also suggests that in some cases salient racial/ethnic identities do not form until after persons leave largely Mexican areas and interact with Anglos. Strong racial/ethnic identities then form as result of discrimination from Anglos (Dowling 1999).

The presence of other racial/ethnic minority groups, in addition to one's own group appears to affect racial/ethnic identity for Latinos. Rodriguez found some evidence that Latinos who live in states with a larger percentage of Hispanics were more likely to identify as "Other," while those residing in states with more Blacks were less likely to identify as "Other"(Rodriguez 1991). Puerto Ricans were more likely to identify as "White" when in areas with higher concentrations of Blacks. A number of factors may be at play here. One explanation is that Puerto Ricans may not identify with their African heritage on the census in these areas because they have more interaction with African Americans and as a result, view themselves as being culturally different from African Americans. Another explanation is that similar to Waters' (1999) findings regarding

black immigrants from the West Indies, they may not want to be grouped with African Americans because of negative stereotypes about African Americans. Still another explanation may be that conflicts between Latinos and African Americans may contribute further to this identification.

Physical Appearance and Categorization by Others. Phenotype is an important component in identity formation as it affects how one is categorized and treated both by persons within one's racial/ethnic and by outsiders. While appearance as Hispanic (self perceptions of appearance) has been marginally linked to identifying as Hispanic in mixed-ethnic persons (Stephan and Stephan 1989), other studies have suggested that appearance as lighter-skinned or with more Anglo features does not deter persons of mixed background from identification as Latino (de Anda and Riddel 1991; Salgado de Snyder, Lopez, and Padilla 1982, Dowling 1999). The role of discrimination is closely linked to physical appearance and categorization by others; darker-skinned persons have little option in denying their racial background when categorized by others on the basis of skin color (Dowling 1999, Waters 1999).

In Waters' study on mixed-ethnic whites, she found that persons sometimes identified more with the ethnicity of their surname (Waters 1990). For Latinos, this is an important factor in categorization from others, and is especially pertinent for persons of mixed ancestry (Dowling 1999). Rodriguez (1992) found that the role of appearance and surname in racial self-classification was complicated. Respondents sometimes concurred with external classification (e.g. If people label me Black, then I guess I am Black.), but

other times rejected classification from others (e.g. Others would classify me as Black, but I would say my race is Hispanic because I am not African American.).

Overall, racial identification is a complex process including multiple factors related to age, gender, socio-economic status, nativity, socialization, social networks, and physical appearance. While each of these factors contributes to the formation of racial/ethnic identity, not one solely determines identification. Racial/ethnic identification is constantly negotiated as a process of both self appraisal and external classification (Nagel 1994, Waters 1999).

Panethnicity and Variation Within the "Latino/Hispanic" Label

While the most common "other race" response to the census is Hispanic, Latino, or a Latino national origin (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, etc.), there is no way of knowing whether those who write in these identifiers (especially nationalities) view themselves as a part of a cohesive Hispanic or Latino group. That is, in writing in "Mexican" for example, are they identifying simply as a Mexican immigrant? As a part of a U.S. Mexican American community? Or, as part of a larger Latino/Hispanic community? Research on the differences between identification with panethnic Hispanic/Latino labels or national origin reveal significant differences between these groups (Portes and MacLeod 1996, Hurtado, Gurin, and Peng 1995, Vila 2000).

Portes and MacLeod (1996) found that children who adopted a "Hispanic" label did not fair as well as those who maintained national origin identities. These identifications as panethnic Latino/Hispanic and with specific nationalities are not

mutually exclusive though. Many scholars argue that these labels often coexist for Latinos (Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 2000, Oboler 1995). Some researchers view these panethnic identifications as situational alliances for particular political ends (Padilla 1985), others as emergent from shared urban space (Bean and Tienda 1987, Moore 1990), and still others as the result of racist discrimination and labeling from the dominant society (Oboler 1995). This panethnic label can be politically useful, but also may subsume great differences in politics and identification between groups who identify as Latino/Hispanic.

Among Latinos, there is much variation by specific national-origin group. For example, overall Cuban Americans fair far better than other Latino groups in educational attainment and professional employment (Therrien and Ramirez 2001). Mexican Americans are the least likely among the Latino sub-groups to work in professional or managerial positions, and have the lowest percentage who graduate high school (Therrien and Ramirez 2001). Puerto Ricans have higher infant mortality rates than other Latino groups (Landale et. al. 1999), and according to some research, may have higher rates of residential segregation comparable to other Latinos (Santiago 1996).

Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans are more likely to identify as "Other" on the census race question than Cubans and other Latinos (Rodriguez 2000). And Cubans in particular have the lowest percentage who identify as "Other," and the highest percentage who identify as "White" at 87% (Dowling 2001). Because of the striking differences among Latino populations, it is important to focus on specific groups and

their individual histories and labeling processes. My project explores racial identity among Mexican Americans specifically.

Overall, Rodriguez emphasizes that while evidence suggests identifying as "Other" is linked to lower education and a less assimilated identity, a significant number of Latinos in each category (by education, nativity, and language use) still identity as "Other." My study will add to this by 1) focusing specifically on Mexican Americans and the differences between identification as "White" vs. "Other," 2) using logistic regression models to estimate the probability of labeling as "Other," 3) interviewing Mexican Americans about their identification processes.

Research Questions and Conceptual Framework

This dissertation takes a "constructed ethnicity" (Nagel 1994) approach, examining the ways in which Mexican Americans label themselves both historically and currently. Within this framework, racial/ethnic identity is viewed as a process whereby identity is negotiated both through external forces (categorization by others) and more social psychological factors (socialization, social networks etc.). It is far too simplistic to say that Mexican Americans or any racial/ethnic minority group identify solely as a result of either personal politics or external constraint. Neither do Mexican Americans mobilize only as a basis for obtaining resources. Rather, a complex set of factors influence the construction of ethnic or racial identities and how groups choose to call on shared history and culture (Marquez 2001). Because of the complexity of the racial/ethnic identification process, I rely on multiple methods including historical

analysis, census analysis and interviews to help garner a more thorough understanding of the racial identification of Mexican Americans.

Each subsequent chapter will address some aspect of the following four primary research questions. First, *Why did Mexican Americans in the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) argue that they were "White" and how did they construct this "Whiteness" to resist a racialized identity on the U.S. Census?* Chapter 2 explores racial ideology in the early 20th century and the position of Mexican Americans in the racial politics of Texas during this period. Then utilizing LULAC newsletters, I explore the ways in which LULAC members constructed "White" identities, and lobbied for change on the basis of these identities.

Second, *What are the differences between Mexican Americans who identify as "White" on the census and those who do not?* Chapters 3 and 4 examine what factors contribute to racial/ethnic identification for Mexican Americans using both census data and in-depth interviews. In chapter 3, I utilize census data to explore the probability of identifying as "other race" vs. "White." I am interested in how this may vary by age, gender, socio-economic variables such as income and education, as well as region, nativity/immigration status and Spanish language usage. While a data set such as the census allows for a representative large sample, there are a number of questions the census does not ask that are pertinent to racial/ethnic identification. For example, the census does not gather information on generational status (beyond immigrant vs. native-born), nor does it contain information on the racial/ethnic composition of the respondents' social networks, participation in cultural events or political organizations,

physical appearance, or frequency of Spanish language usage. I include questions regarding these variables in my interviews. In chapter 4, I use information gathered from my fifty-two in-depth interviews to explore in much more detail issues such as social networks and participation in political organizations, generational status, physical appearance, and experiences with discrimination that are not obtained by the census.

Third, I explore *What racial or ethnic labels are meaningful for Mexican Americans?* In chapter 5, I examine my respondents' write-in responses to "Other" race. I also explore the understanding and use of the labels Mexican, Mexicano/a, Mexican American, Hispanic, Latino/a, Chicano/a, and Tejano/a for both respondents who selected "Other" for their race and those who chose "White." In this chapter, I delve into the regional construction of racial and ethnic labels, exploring their use in the day-to-day lives of my respondents. I am interested in the ability of federally defined census racial options to capture racial identities as they have been constructed in local contexts, specifically in Texas.

Finally, chapter 6 explores the question, *What is the meaning Mexican American "whiteness" on the census?* I will address the arguments that identification as "White" on the census and increasing rates of intermarriage mean that Mexican Americans are assimilating into the dominant Anglo culture. I will explore what this "White" or "non-White" identity means to respondents. Furthermore, I will investigate the ways in which racial definitions are constructed locally, and the disjuncture that often occurs between these regional definitions and federal classification.

Chapter 2: Modernity and Texas Racial Politics in the Early Twentieth Century, LULAC and the Construction of the White Mexican

Introduction

> I don't know whether she looks like a negro or a white person, she don't look like a white person…I know a negro when I see them, she may have white blood in her, I couldn't say, she don't look like a white person, she looks like a colored person.[1]
>
> Will Moore, witness for the state
> State of Texas vs. F. Flores

Ellen Dukes Flores and her husband were brought to trial in the District Court of Angelina County Texas in October 1909. The charge against Mr. Flores[2] was that he stood in violation of the state law forbidding intermarriage between "whites and the Negro race." Ellen Dukes, the state alleged was within the "third generation inclusive" standard that defined a "negro" as someone with one eighth or more of "negro" or African blood. Will Moore, an acquaintance of Dukes, was called to testify for the state. When continually asked to what race Dukes belonged, Moore replied that he did not know. While Moore could not testify with certainty that Dukes was "negro" within the legal definition, he admits "she don't look like a white person, she looks like a colored person."[3]

Flores and Dukes were both actually of Mexican origin. Under the law, if there was no "mixed blood descended from negro ancestry from the third generation inclusive" then "Mexicans, Spaniards and all other persons not included in the above definition of

[1] State of Texas vs. F. Flores, trial summary documents, retrieved from the Texas State Archives
[2] Strangely, court documents did not list a first name for Mr. Flores; only his first initial "F" was noted. To avoid confusion, I will refer to him as "Flores" and to his wife Ellen Dukes Flores as "Dukes."
[3] State of Texas vs. F. Flores

'negro' shall be deemed a white person." Dukes claimed that her mother was Mexican, and that her father was Mexican but "had some negro blood in him." "My father's color was very bright," she said. "He was a great deal brighter color than I am; my father's hair was not kinky or nappy like the ordinary negro, his hair was not as bad as my hair, it was straighter." Dukes tried to minimize the amount of African ancestry in her heritage. But her hair and other physical attributes were used to define her by witnesses as "negro."[4] Jim Derrick, the Deputy Constable of Nacogdoches, was asked why he believed her to be "negro." Derrick replied, "She has the physical appearance of a negro, she is kinky headed and very dark, what we would call a dark yellow color." His lawyer asked, "Any other physical appearance of a negro?" Derrick answered, "Well just a plain old fat negro woman is all."

While physical appearance and gender body stereotypes were used to racially define Dukes, other evidence was also introduced by the state to call her racial identity into question. The state asked the witnesses to testify about Dukes' friends and acquaintances. Witnesses testified for the prosecution that Dukes associated primarily with "negroes" and not with whites. Dukes testified in her defense that while it was true that she did not associate with whites, she claimed that she had mostly associated with Mexicans. Townsend, attorney for the defense, stressed her Spanish fluency and social networks in an effort to mark her as culturally Mexican, and therefore white.[5]

[4] ibid.
[5] ibid.

Townsend also tried to cast doubt on his client Flores' racial identity. Under his questioning, Dukes asserted that her husband had always associated with "negroes"—not with whites. Another witness for the defense further stated that Flores "never at all passed on equality with white people."[6] Flores, however, would not testify in the case. Testimony for the state re-counted Flores' assertion to the deputy that he was Spanish and had no "negro" blood. Had Flores taken the stand and testified that he had any "negro" blood, the charges would have simply been dropped. One witness even testified that she thought Flores would have wanted to do this. But Flores gave no testimony. He was found guilty of "unlawfully marrying a negro" and sentenced to two years in prison.[7]

Townsend filed an appeal, arguing that the state had wholly failed to make its case; that is, the state had no testimony as to the exact amount of "negro" ancestry of Dukes. Townsend further argued that the jury had been instructed to regard Flores as Spanish ancestry (white), when the state had failed to prove his ancestry included no "negro" ancestry. The ruling was overturned in June of 1910 on the basis that the state had failed to make its case that Dukes was "negro." Flores' racial identity stood unquestioned. It is unclear exactly how much time Flores spent in jail. Court records indicate that Townsend had applied for more time to prepare for the trial because while imprisoned, Flores had been unable to locate a friend who could testify on his behalf. It is evident that Flores was jailed while awaiting trial and then served eight months of a

[6] Ibid. E. L. Cordova, witness for the state.
[7] Ibid.

two-year sentence.[8] Why would a Mexican man be unwilling to call himself "negro" and renounce his whiteness if his own freedom demanded such a declaration? The answer requires a complex examination of racial discourse surrounding Mexican Americans and definitions of whiteness in the early twentieth century. This chapter explores the racial context of Texas that preceded the formation of League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) in 1929, and how LULAC constructed racially "White" identities.

Modernity and Race

Contemporary research on modern racial ideology marks the early twentieth century as a time when scientific notions of race were challenged by anthropological conceptions of race as culturally defined. This often suggests a move from biological and hierarchical definitions of race to more cultural and egalitarian notions of race. However, Peggy Pascoe argues that this transition was far from benign.

Pascoe outlines two major contradictory themes in "modernist racial ideology": 1) Race is irrational; it makes no sense. Scientists who study race cannot agree on what defines racial groups because race simply does not exist. 2) Race exists biologically, but is irrelevant in defining people. Culture overrides any biological influence. Race should be abandoned in favor of cultural identifiers such as language, customs, intellect and character (Pascoe 1996).

While this may appear more egalitarian or anti-racist than the scientific racist discourse, Pascoe asserts that there are problems with this thinking. "Modernist racial

[8] Ibid.

ideology" called for the "deliberate nonrecognition of race" (Pascoe 1996, p.48). Pascoe recognizes this as the modern precursor of what contemporary race scholars call the "color-blind" rhetoric. That is, if one does not name race, one is not racist. This refusal to name race can be problematic, as addressing racism requires that the problem be specified. Far from a more egalitarian or neutral understanding of race, this modernist racial ideology may have made the problem of racism more difficult to identify and combat. Speaking of how this affected late twentieth century racial ideology, Pascoe writes:

> Attaching themselves to the modernist narrowing of the definition of race to biology and biology alone, conservative thinkers began to contend that unless their ideas rested solely and explicitly on a belief in biological inferiority, they should not be considered racist. They began to advance "cultural" arguments of there own, insisting that their proposals were based on factors such as social analysis, business practicality, or merit—on anything, in other words, except race (Pascoe 1996, p.68).

Pascoe believes that the modern split between biology and culture paved the way for this shift in racial discourse. But did this split between (race as) biology and culture occur in a modern context?

Pascoe writes that previous to this modern split between biology and culture, race was believed to be a biologically determined identity. This essential identity "included not only biology but also culture, morality, and intelligence" (Pascoe 1996, p.48). That is race was an ascribed, essential, immutable identity, but was also laden with social characteristics. In the early twentieth century, Pascoe argues, biology and culture began

to separate leading to this narrow understanding of race as merely biology and culture as social, intellectual, and moral characteristics (Pascoe 1996).

Ariela Gross (1998) argues that researchers who maintain this shift occurred in the early twentieth century are ignoring the ways in which race was culturally and socially marked in nineteenth century racial ideology. Speaking of Pascoe and other researchers' work, Gross writes, "…these views depend on an understanding of a past in which race meant simply biology, and racism was something 'hard,' scientifically based and natural" (Gross 1998, p.114). Gross believes that this pristine biological concept of race never really existed. Gross examined sixty-eight nineteenth century court cases in which racial determination was the legal issue. Most of these cases spanned from 1845 to 1861. She found that while biology (ancestry and appearance) is important in these trials, reputation, and performative aspects of racial identity also consistently played a role in the testimony and outcomes of these cases. Gross writes:

> Race as ascriptive identity, or reputation in society, and race as performance overlapped to some extent, but I believe they are analytically distinct. Here reputation refers to acceptance in society, others beliefs about one's identity, and one's social associations, whereas performance refers to one's acts. Finally, race as a scientific category, interpreted by medical experts or others who used the new language of physiology and ethnology, began to appear in the courtroom in the late 1840's (Gross 1998, p.133).

Gross found that race did become increasingly more "performative" in its conceptualization, continually linked to culture and what it meant to socially be "white." It was believed that there was an "essence" to whiteness and to blackness, and that this

essence would make itself known through the behaviors of the individual. And displaying one's whiteness differed for men and women.

"Witnesses at trial frequently proved a man's whiteness by reporting on his performance of citizenship—voting, mustering for the militia, sitting on a jury—that made rightsholding part of the definition of whiteness for men" (Gross 1998, p.113). Men performed whiteness by exercising legal rights of citizenship. However, this performance was also contingent on reputation and ascriptive characteristics. Since legal rights were only granted to whites, these men must have had some acceptance of their white identities in order to have proof of this performance of citizenship (Gross 1998).

While whiteness was linked to the public sphere for men, for women whiteness was proved through moral virtue. "Beauty and goodness," "virtue and honor," and "good conduct and industry" were the moral codings of the white woman (Gross 1998, pp. 166-167). Sexual promiscuity, excessive displays of any sort, or coarseness could cast a shadow on a woman's claim to whiteness. Women worked to prove feminine virtues and strong morals in their performances of whiteness (Gross 1998).

Overall, Gross' work suggests that the split between biology and culture with regards to race may have long preceded modernity. Furthermore, her work complicates Pascoe's theory that discourse surrounding race shifted to more cultural conceptions in a modern context. This does not invalidate Pascoe's insightful reading of modernity and race, but I think that it suggests that modernist racial ideology may be more complicated. Though race was strongly linked to biology and "essence" in the nineteenth century, legal cases reveal that this essence was defined through social, cultural, and/or performative

ways. The role of mutable characteristics of behavior in determining racial identity was perhaps as strong in the nineteenth century, as in the twentieth century.

One important contribution of Pascoe's work is her assertion that shifts in racial discourse from biology to culture (whether this occurred in a modern context, or as Gross suggests was present in nineteenth century) should not be understood as egalitarian or non-racist. Rather, racial ideologies all serve purposes particular to their socio-historical context. We must resist notions of an "innocent modernity" removed from the lives and histories of persons of color and other persons outside of a European and/or urban middle-class setting (Gilroy 1993). I will now shift my focus to the impact of modernity on rural South Texas and Mexican American racial ideology.

Modernity and Mexican Americans

> While the modern world had its beginning far from the Texas-Mexican border, the occurrences here provided an important perspective on how global processes and forces are both constitutive of and repositioned by local practices and concerns.[9]
>
> Richard Flores

Rural South Texas underwent drastic changes during early twentieth century as commercial farming replaced local farms and cattle ranches. Mexican ranches were overcome by a rapid influx of Anglo newcomers. Montejano writes:

> Having cleared the area of chaparrel, mesquite, and conservative ranchers, the newcomer farmers were essentially free to build a new society. The trappings of development were dramatic signs of the new social order. Introduced rapidly in the 1920's, automobiles, highways, libraries, movie houses and drugstores, and so on soon distinguished modern farm areas from the horse and cow country of

[9] Flores, Richard. "Mexicans, Modernity, and *Martyrs of the Alamo"* in *Reflexiones 1998.*Austin, TX: Center for Mexican American Studies Press, p.2.

> ranch counties. So impressive were the changes that many newcomers saw themselves as the "first settlers" of the region (Montejano 1987, p.159).

The South Texas commercial labor market was born as Anglo farmers sought a cheap labor supply. Social arrangements shifted to a hierarchical order: farmer/laborer, Anglo/Mexican (Montejano 1987).

To Anglo newcomers, Mexican workers were ready to serve their needs. Segregation of schools and other public facilities kept Mexicans in their place and ensured their position as low-wage workers. A racial ideology that defined "white" as Anglo and persons of Mexican origin as racially separate from this "whiteness" served to support this segregation. And a historical amnesia with regard to the previous occupation of this land allowed Anglo settlers to believe themselves to be the "first settlers" and Mexicans the foreign invaders (Montejano 1987).

Mexican persons living in the Texas were granted U.S. citizenship through the Treaty of Guadalupe in 1848 when the land was acquired from Mexico. However, citizenship and legal rights were still contingent upon whiteness. And while the courts may have afforded Mexican Americans the status of "White," popular definitions of race at the time did not favor the inclusion of Mexican persons as a part of the "White" race (Foley 1998). Thus, Mexican Americans, who were often of racially mixed ancestry, found themselves in an ambiguous category between the "white" and "negro" races. Neil Foley writes:

> As a racially mixed group, Mexicans, Like Indians and Asians lived in a black-and-white nation that regarded them neither as black nor as white. Although small numbers of Mexican Americans—usually light-skinned, middle-class Mexican Americans—claimed to be white, the overwhelming majority of Texas whites

> regarded Mexicans as a "mongrelized" race of Indian, African, and Spanish ancestry. In Texas, unlike other parts of the South, whiteness meant not only not black but also not Mexican (Foley 1997, p.5).

While the Treaty had declared Mexicans citizens, economic forces of the modernizing South Texas contributed to a climate, which sought to profit from the racialization of Mexicans. The rise of the "Texas Modern" led to a need for contractual, cheap labor. Mexican immigrants filled this need. And racialization and segregation of this group ensured a steady supply of laborers (Flores 1999, Foley 1997, Montejano 1987).

But, native-born Mexican Americans mobilized to resist being grouped with this class of Mexican laborers. In Texas, organizations such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) formed, arguing that they were indeed citizens, a white race of Latin descent, separate from the Mexican immigrant workers (Marquez 1993).

Performing Whiteness

Using LULAC newsletters from the Benson Latin American Collection, I examine how LULAC members articulated White identities. LULAC claims credit for the removal of the "Mexican" racial category following the 1930 census.[10] The following analysis of LULAC newsletters from the 1930's and 1940's show how the organization asserted whiteness, as well as how this performance of whiteness differed for men and women.

[10] LULAC claims that they pressured the U.S. government to remove the "Mexican" race and to count persons of Mexican ancestry as White. These statements regarding their involvement in the removal of the "Mexican" racial category are included in their organizational history on their website, http:///www.lulac.org. I plan to further investigate this issue at a later date. For now, I am focusing on how the organization constructed White identities through their newsletters.

LULAC was established in Corpus Christi in 1929 (Marquez 1993). The group used an "assimilationist" strategy, promoting acculturation as a way to gain access to social institutions and political arenas in a segregated society (Marquez 1993, Garcia 1989). Membership in the group was restricted to U.S. citizens (Foley 1998, Marquez 1993). "The greatest care should be exercised to distinguish between this character of citizen and the alien of latin-extraction."[11] LULAC members wanted to distinguish themselves from Mexicans of foreign birth. They encouraged members to be loyal to the United States, and to stop observing any Mexican holidays. "Latin Americans of the United States should cease to observe the holidays of Mexico and join heartily in observing the holidays of the United States…The more quickly you adopt American customs and American traditions the better citizens you will become in the United States."[12]

The word "Mexican" itself was notably absent from the organization's name. Rather, its members were "Latin-Americans" with an emphasis on the "American." LULAC was formed during a time of great hostility towards persons of Mexican ancestry in Texas (Marquez 1993, Montejano 1987). With their racial identity questioned by Anglos, Mexican Americans formed this organization in an effort to assert their citizenship (as mentioned in their name) and perhaps more importantly to establish their whiteness. And, this construction of "White" identities differed for men and women.

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[11] Editorial "Are Texas-Mexicans 'Americans?' "in LULAC News, San Antonio, Texas, April 1932 Vol. 1 No.9, From the Benson Archives

[2] Hardin, Sid L. "The Glory of American Citizenship" in LULAC News, San Antonio, Texas, Dec. 1932, Vol.2 No. 4, From the Benson Archives

[3] Editorial "Are Texas-Mexicans 'Americans?' "in LULAC News, San Antonio, Texas, April 1932

One LULAC News editorial reads, "As a matter of absolute record, it was the Latin-American (Mexicans) who first braved and tamed the Texas wilderness. They were the first white race to inhabit this vast empire of ours." [13] Mexican Americans attempted to perform whiteness by emphasizing citizenship, loyalty, and militia participation for men. The editorial continues, "The League of United Latin American Citizens was organized among other things for the purpose of developing members of our Race the best and purest and most perfect type of a true and loyal citizen of the United States…"[14]

LULAC writers drew on themes of conquest and civilization, loyalty, and voting participation to articulate their whiteness. When some acknowledged indigenous ancestry, it was done in such a way as to emphasize both "fierceness" and "culture." De La Garza wrote:

> Conditions have reached a point where your neighbors say, "a white and a Mexican!" Yet, in your veins races the hot blood of the adventurous Castilian nobleman, the whitest blood in the world, and the blood of cultured Aztecs and fierce Apaches, the reddest blood in the world! So why this disrespectful slap in the face? You can hold your head up with the best, and you should do so, in order to keep your ancestors from turning in their graves![15]

Although this editorial calls attention to "cultured" indigenous ancestry, most LULAC members solely emphasized the nobility of their European, Spanish ancestry. They named Spanish-origin persons who fought along side Anglos for separation from Mexico. LULAC News reads:

Vol. 1 No.9, From the Benson Archives

[14] Ibid.

[15] De La Garza, Rodolfo. "Who Are You" in LULAC News, San Antonio, Texas, Sept. 1932, Vol.2 No. 1, From the Benson Archives

> Therefore, the League is laboring to redeem and place on equality before the law and before God, not Mexicans nor aliens, but bona fide descendents of Texas Patriots and also descendants of Latin-American citizens of this great country of ours, who in large numbers crossed the Atlantic and whose bodies were buried with due military honors in Flanders' field as indisputable evidence of their devotion and loyalty to the flag and our native country.[16]

Distinguishing themselves from migrant workers, those "cotton picking drifters,"[17] LULAC members drew on a "Texas Patriot" history of conquest and loyalty to Texas and America.

While invoking the names of men who served the United States, LULAC did not neglect the role of women in its organization. Around 1934, women's councils began forming in the organization. In 1937, Mrs. F. I. Montemayor wrote an editorial in the El Paso newsletter encouraging women's involvement in LULAC. Montemayor wrote:

> The idea that "the woman's place is in the home" passed out of the picture with hoop skirts and bustles, and now it is recognized that women hold as high a position in all walks of life as do men. Women have come to play a vital part in the political, religious, social, and cultural aspects of the modern world that was unheard of until a relative short time ago.[18]

While this editorial speaks of equality between the sexes and their abilities, it is clear from the newsletters that this equality did not exist.

Articles discussing ladies' councils, spoke in very gendered terms of their luncheons and tea parties, and their role in developing "junior leagues" for the children. Women's names usually included markers such as "wife and mother," "pleasant to meet,"

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[16] Editorial "Are Texas-Mexicans 'Americans?' "in LULAC News, San Antonio, Texas, April 1932 Vol. 1 No.9, From the Benson Archives

[7] Lozano, Ruben R. "LULAC Subsidiaries" in LULAC News, San Antonio, Texas, Oct. 1932, Vol.2 No. 2, From the Benson Archives

[18] Montemayor, F. I. "Women's Opportunity in LULAC" in LULAC News, El Paso, Texas, 1937, Vol.4 No. 8 From the Benson Archives

or other language suggesting servitude, beauty, manners, and grace. There was no reference to labor of these women, outside of their volunteer work for the cause. And while these women were taking on roles in the public sphere, the newsletters made sure to emphasize their role in the private sphere as wives, daughters, and mothers, responsible for fostering children's participation in the organization. In another editorial in 1939, Montemayor writes:

> Bear in mind that, "Back of the success of any man, there is a woman," and women are God's MOST PRECIOUS GIFT TO MEN, therefore Let's organize more Ladies, lets organize more Junior Lulac Councils, let's train our children.[19]

Overall, my analysis of racial ideology in the formation of LULAC demonstrates the ways in which Mexican Americans asserted whiteness through citizenship and loyalty to America. Furthermore, for women in the group, beauty, motherhood, and other feminine attributes were stressed to convey a refined image of white womanhood. In these ways, these middle-class Mexican Americans organized to defend their rights, fighting against segregation, poor schools, and voting restrictions, such as poll taxes, and---most pertinent to this study—resisting a racialized identity on the U.S. Census.

Conclusion

Examining the transcripts from the "Fifteenth and Subsequent Decennial Census" hearings for January 1928, I investigated how the development of the "Mexican" category emerged. Congress members discussed concerns regarding enumerating who

[19] Montemayor, F. I. "When….and Then Only" in LULAC News, El Paso, Texas, Mar. 1939, Vol.6 From the Benson Archives

they perceived to be a transient population, migrating for work, but then returning to Mexico. Congress members also expressed concern over the growing Mexican population, and the difficulty in distinguishing between Mexican-ancestry persons born here and newer immigrants.[20] My investigation of the census hearings regarding the "Mexican" racial classification suggests that race, nationality, and nativity were conflated for congress members attempting to enumerate the Mexican-ancestry population.

When faced with racialization in the U.S. census, native-born middle class Mexican Americans in Texas wanted to distance themselves from newer immigrants and African Americans. In an attempt to construct their identities as "White," they emphasized their status as U.S.-born, often asserting that their ancestors preceded the Anglo colonizers of Texas. LULAC members also emphasized their Spanish ancestry and distanced themselves from immigrants and African Americans. Furthermore, their performance of whiteness was gendered. For men, whiteness was linked to citizenship, loyalty, and militia participation, while for women, servitude, beauty, manners, and grace marked them as white. In the subsequent chapters I will turn my attention to contemporary racial identification of Mexican Americans. Exploring what factors are associated with racial identification as "White" for Mexican Americans.

[20] Congressional Information Services. "Fifteenth and Subsequent Decennial Census" hearings for January 1928.

Chapter 3: The "Other" Race of Mexican Americans: Exploring Racial Identification in the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Censuses

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the responses of Mexican Americans to the census race question. I am interested in examining who identifies as "Other" race. What are the differences between these Mexican Americans and those who identify as "White"? I begin with an analysis of data at the national level for both 1990 and 2000, and then I explore the racial identification of Mexican Americans in Texas and California separately.

Data

I utilize data from the 5% Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) for both the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Censuses to explore the racial identification of Mexican Americans. In both years, the Mexican American population was identified using the Hispanic/Latino origin question. This question further asked respondents to identify as "Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or other Hispanic." For both my 1990 and 2000 data analyses, those who identified as Mexican American on this question who were 18 years or older and not residing in institutionalized settings were included in the sample. The weighted sample population included 8,285,741 persons in 1990 and 12, 944,554 persons in 2000.

Table 3.1: Racial Identification of Mexican Americans in the 1990 US Census

	Percent	n
White	50.72	4,202,779
Other	47.40	3,927,679
Native American	0.67	55,762
Black	0.77	64,081
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.43	35,440
	100.0	8,285,741

Source: 5% PUMS (weighted), 1990

Variables and Measurement

In 1990, the census racial identification question provided options for: White, Black or Negro, Indian American (specify tribe), Eskimo, Aleut, Asian or Pacific Islander (specific groups listed), and Other race (see Appendix A for 1990 questionnaire). To examine the racial identification of the sample, I simplified these further into five racial categories: White, Black, Native American (including Alaskan native tribes Eskimo and Aleut), Asian/Pacific Islander, and Other race (see Table 3.1). Only 64,081 Mexican Americans, or approximately .8% of the sample identified as Black. Even fewer identified as Native American (.7%) or Asian/Pacific Islander (.4%). Over 98% of Mexican Americans identified either as White (50.7%) or as Other (47.4%).

In 2000, the census racial identification question provided options for White, Black, African American or Negro, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander (specific groups listed), and Other race (see Appendix B for 2000 questionnaire). In contrast to the 1990 census in which respondents were instructed to choose only one

Table 3.2: Racial Identification of Mexican Americans in the 2000 US Census

	Percent	n
White alone	48.02	6,216,154
Other alone	45.65	5,909,331
Native American alone	1.10	142,169
Black alone	0.59	75,907
Asian or Pacific Islander alone	0.26	33,629
More Than One Race	4.38	567,364
	100.0	12,944,554

Source: 5% PUMS (weighted), 2000

race, in the 2000 census, the instructions indicated that persons may select more than one race. I have simplified the responses into six groups: White alone, Black alone, Native American alone (including Alaskan natives), Asian/Pacific Islander alone, Other race alone, and More than one race (see Table 3.2). Only 4% of Mexican Americans selected more than one race. Even fewer selected Native American alone (1.1%), Black alone (.6%), or Asian/Pacific Islander alone (.3%). Approximately 94% selected White alone (48.0%) or Other alone (45.7%). Since the study focuses on this distinction between "White" and "Other," and because of the very small portion of the sample identified as another group, those who identified as Black, Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, or who selected more than one race were excluded from the study. Thus my samples for both 1990 and 2000 include Mexican Americans who were 18 years or older and who indicated "White" or "Other" for their race. With this restriction, my weighted population is 8,130,458 for 1990 and 12,125,485 for 2000.

Previous research has suggested racial/ethnic identity varies by gender (Gross 1999), age and cohort effects (Rodriguez 1991, Rodriguez 2000, Sanchez Jankowski), nativity status (Hurtado, Gurin, and Peng 1994, Gutierrez 1995), language use (Dowling 1999, Rodriguez 2000), and racial/ethnic composition of region or city (Portes 1984, Rodriguez 1991). This study explores the effects of numerous variables on racial identification, including: (1) basic demographic variables of sex and age, (2) socio-economic status variables of education and income, (3) assimilation/acculturation variables of nativity/immigration status, use of Spanish language in the home, residence in the Southwest, and race of spouse. I use logistic regression to explore these factors.

Logistic regression models are the most accurate way to estimate the odds of a given response for a dichotomous variable such as labeling as "White" vs. "Other." This kind of model allows one to isolate the effects of each variable independently. I have constructed four logistic regression models to examine these predictors of racial identity. Model 1 includes the basic demographic variables sex and age. While Rodriguez (1991) found some evidence suggesting older Puerto Ricans were less likely to identify as "Other," I am unfamiliar with any study on this topic of racial identification on the census that specifically focuses on gender. I hypothesize that racial identification of Mexican Americans on the census will not vary significantly by gender, but that age will be related to identification. I have divided the sample into five age groups for both 1990 and 2000: "18-24," "25-34," "35-44," "45-54," and "55 years or older." I hypothesize that younger Mexican Americans will be more likely to identify as "Other" than older cohorts. Older respondents who may have lived through periods of more formal segregation and

discriminatory practices before the various civil rights movements, may be more likely to identify as "White," not wanting to assume a racialized "non-White" identity.

Model 2 includes the basic demographic variables age and sex, but adds socio-economic variables of educational attainment and income. Previous research on racial identification of Mexican Americans has found that those with less education are more likely to identify as "Other" on the 1990 Census (Rodriguez 2000). I have divided educational attainment into four categories for both 1990 and 2000: "less than high school," "high school degree," "some college," and "college degree." For both 1990 and 2000, I divided the sample into household income quintiles, with approximately twenty percent of the population in each category. For 1990, the categories were: "$12,000 or less" "$12,001-$22,900," "$22,001-$33,400," "$33,401-$49,700," and "$49,701 or more." For 2000, where the average income was higher, the categories were: "$19,000 or less" "$19,001-$32,000," "$32,001-$47,400," "$47,401-$70,600," and "$70,601 or more." I hypothesize that in line with the traditional assimilation model, lower education and income will be associated with identification as "Other" for Mexican Americans in my sample.

Model 3 explores the role of assimilation/acculturation and region of residence. Previous research using the 1980 Census data has found Hispanic identification as "Other" may be related to the density of the Hispanic population in the state of residence (Rodriguez 1991). Rodriguez found persons who live in states with a larger percentage of Hispanics were more likely to identify as "Other," while those residing in states with more Blacks were less likely to identify as "Other"(Rodriguez 1991). Considering this

previous finding, I hypothesize that those Mexican Americans who live in the Southwest where the Mexican American population is greater will be more likely to identify as "Other." For both 1990 and 2000, the Southwest is defined as Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas. I will also further explore variation among these by state.

The assimilation/acculturation hypothesis suggests that as ethnic groups assimilate into the mainstream Anglo culture, they become "White" losing their specific cultural heritage (Gordon 1964). Previous research on Mexican Americans has found that while a substantial number of U.S.-born Mexican American identified as "Other" on the 1990 Census, this number was lower than the foreign-born Mexican population (Rodriguez 2000). I will examine nativity, as well as year of entry to the U.S. for immigrants. I have coded immigration status for both 1990 and 2000 as "U.S.-born" or immigrated "within the last 5 years," "6 to 10 years ago," "11-15 years ago," and "more than 15 years ago." In line with a traditional assimilation model (Gordon 1964), I will hypothesize that those born in the U.S. will be less likely to label as "Other," and that those who immigrated within the last 5 years will be most likely to label as "Other."

Another indicator of assimilation is language use. Use of Spanish language for both the 1990 and 2000 samples was measured using the census question inquiring whether this person "uses a language other than English in the home." I am presuming those who responded affirmatively to the question speak Spanish in the home. While there may be a small percentage of error with this assumption, it is the most accurate and widely used measure of Spanish language usage for Latinos in the census (Rodriguez

2000). As language use is a part of cultural identification, following the assimilation/acculturation model I hypothesize that those who speak Spanish in the home are more likely to identify as "Other."

The final stage in Gordon's ethnic assimilation model is intermarriage with the dominant group (Gordon 1964). For 1990, I divided respondents who were married with a spouse present in the household into six groups based on the race/ethnicity of the spouse: Hispanic, and non-Hispanic White, Black, Asian, Native American, and Other race. For 2000, I included these six groups and a non-Hispanic multiple-race spouse group. I hypothesize that respondents who are married to non-Hispanic Whites will be less likely to identify as "Other" that those married to Hispanics.

Model 4, the full model, provides the most comprehensive test of all of the aforementioned variables. Based on logic I have already outlined, I hypothesize that the following associations will hold in the full model:

Hypothesis 1. Woman and men will not differ significantly in their identification as "Other."

Hypothesis 2. Younger Mexican Americans will be more likely to label as "Other."

Hypothesis 3. Less educated Mexican Americans will be more likely to identify as "Other."

Hypothesis 4 Mexican Americans with lower incomes will be more likely to identify as "Other."

Hypothesis 5 Mexican Americans who reside in the Southwest will be more likely to identify as "Other."

Hypothesis 6. Mexican Americans who were born in the U.S. will be least likely to label as "Other," while recent immigrants (within the last five years) will be most likely to identify as "Other."

Hypothesis 7. Mexican Americans who speak Spanish will be more likely to identify as "Other."

Hypothesis 8. Mexican Americans who are married to non-Hispanic Whites will be less likely to identify as "Other" than those married to Hispanics.

Findings at the National Level, 1990 and 2000

Descriptive variables from both 1990 (Table 3.3) and 2000 (Table 3.4) samples indicate a relationship between age and identification as "Other," such that younger Mexican Americans are more likely than older Mexican Americans to identify as "Other." In 1990, Fifty-two percent of 18 to 24 year olds identified as "Other," while 38.2% of those 55 years old or older identified as "Other" (+13.9%). The gap between the youngest and the oldest age groups was even larger in 2000. In 2000, 53.6% of 18-24 year olds identified as "Other," compared to 35.5% of those 55 years or older (+18.1%). Women were slightly less likely than men to identify as "Other" in both 1990 (-2.3%) and 2000 (-2.3%). Persons outside of the Southwest were only slightly more likely to identify as "Other" in 1990 (+2.1%) and 2000 (+2.4%). However, substantial variation between states is noted. In 1990, 75% of the sample resided in California (45.4%) or Texas (30.7%). And in 2000, these two states accounted for 66% of the sample with 40.3% in California and 25.8% in Texas. Yet, there is a sharp contrast in racial

Table 3.3: Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables by Racial Identification for Mexican Americans in the 1990 US Census
Basic Demographic and Socio-economic Variables

	Racial Identity			Sample Distribution	
	% WHITE	%OTHER		Percent	n
Age					
18-24	47.9	52.2		23.2	1,885,577
25-34	48.8	51.2		32.0	2,598,149
35-44	51.8	48.2		20.3	1,649,358
45-54	55.6	44.4		10.9	883,147
55 or older	61.8	38.2		13.7	1,114,227
			Total	100.0	8,130,458
Sex					
Women	52.9	47.1		47.8	3,889,736
Men	50.6	49.4		52.2	4,240,722
			Total	100.0	8,130,458
Region					
Southwest	52.0	48.0		84.2	6,842,592
Non-Southwest	49.9	50.1		15.8	1,287,866
			Total	100.0	8,130,458
State					
California	46.6	53.4		45.5	3,702,403
Texas	58.9	41.1		29.5	2,399,695
Illinois	43.8	56.2		4.6	369,726
Arizona	50.1	49.9		4.6	369,574
New Mexico	68.7	31.3		2.5	203,127
Colorado	58.9	41.1		2.1	167,793
Florida	65.0	35.0		1.1	92,553
Washington	36.2	63.8		1.1	85,605
Other States	52.6	47.4		9.1	739,982
			Total	100.0	8,130,458
Education					
Less Than HS	48.4	51.6		54.7	4,444,968
High School	53.4	46.6		22.0	1,784,790
Some College	55.8	44.2		18.2	1,475,736
College Degree	64.9	35.2		5.2	424,964
			Total	100.0	8,130,458
Income Quintiles					
1 (less than $12,200)	52.8	47.2		20.1	1,637,493
2 ($12,200-$21,999)	49.7	50.3		19.7	1,598,492
3 ($22,000-$33,399)	49.9	50.1		20.1	1,633,989
4 ($33,400-$49,699)	50.8	49.2		20.1	1,636,811
5 ($49,700 or more)	55.2	44.8		20.0	1,623,673
			Total	100.0	8,130,458

Source: 5% PUMS (weighted), 1990
Sample includes: Mexican Americans 18 and older who answer "White" or "Other" for their race.

Table 3.4: Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables by Racial Identification for Mexican Americans in the 2000 US Census
Basic Demographic and Socio-economic Variables

	Racial Identity			Sample Distribution	
	% WHITE	%OTHER		Percent	n
Age					
18-24	46.4	53.6		22.5	2,726,311
25-34	48.5	51.5		29.9	3,626,826
35-44	50.8	49.2		22.4	2,718,115
45-54	54.2	45.8		12.8	1,548,785
55 or older	64.5	35.5		12.4	1,505,448
			Total	100.0	12,125,485
Sex					
Women	52.5	47.5		47.1	5,715,136
Men	50.2	49.8		52.9	6,410,349
			Total	100.0	12,125,485
Region					
Southwest	51.9	48.1		75.0	9,091,570
Non-Southwest	49.5	50.5		25.0	3,033,915
			Total	100.0	12,125,485
State					
California	44.1	55.9		40.3	4,883,632
Texas	63.6	36.4		25.8	3,124,518
Illinois	49.0	51.0		5.7	686,134
Arizona	51.5	48.5		5.1	613,836
Colorado	53.4	46.7		2.2	266,199
Florida	62.5	37.5		1.8	212,958
New Mexico	58.4	41.6		1.7	203,385
Washington	40.3	59.7		1.5	176,639
Other States	49.0	51.0		16.2	1,958,184
			Total	100.0	12,125,485
Education					
Less Than HS	48.0	52.0		53.7	6,509,742
High School	51.8	48.2		22.1	2,679,195
Some College	55.3	44.7		18.0	2,178,423
College Degree	65.3	34.8		6.3	758,125
			Total	100.0	12,125,485
Income Quintiles					
1 (less than $19,000)	53.0	47.0		20.0	2,421,781
2 ($19,000-$31,999)	50.4	49.6		19.8	2,394,392
3 ($32,000-$47,399)	49.7	50.3		19.8	2,398,963
4 ($47,400-$70,599)	50.2	49.9		20.8	2,460,571
5 ($70,600 or more)	53.1	47.0		20.2	2,449,778
			Total	100.0	12,125,485

Source: 5% PUMS (weighted), 2000
Sample includes: Mexican Americans 18 and older who answer "White" or "Other" for their race.

identification patterns between these states. In 1990, 41.1% of Mexican Americans in Texas labeled as "Other," 12.3% less than the number who identified as "Other" in California that year. And in 2000, the gap was larger with only 36.4% of Mexican Americans in Texas labeling as "Other," compared to 55.9% in California (-19.5%).

Variation in educational attainment reveals identification as "Other" is more likely among the least educated group. In 1990, 51.6% of Mexican Americans who did not graduate high school identified as "Other," while 35.2% of those who had a college degree identified as "Other" (+16.4%). And in 2000, the gap between those who did not complete high school and those who were college graduates was slightly larger at 17.2%. Variation by income was not as pronounced, but in both 1990 and 2000, those in the highest and lowest income groups were slightly less likely to identify as "Other" than those in the middle income groups.

Tables 3.5 and 3.4 detail the characteristics of the 1990 and 2000 samples regarding Spanish language use, nativity, and race of spouse. Only 18.9% of the 1990 sample and 17.2% of the 2000 sample did not speak Spanish in the home. This "only English" group was less likely than those who spoke Spanish to identify as "Other" in both 1990 (-11.5%) and 2000 (-10.4%). In both years, those who were born in the US were less likely than any of the immigrant groups to identify as "Other." However, no distinct pattern by years since immigration is apparent. Finally, respondents who were married to non-Hispanic Whites were less likely to label as "Other" compared with those married to Hispanics (-14.6% in 1990, -13.9% in 2000). Those married to non-Hispanic Blacks were more likely to identify as "Other" compared to those who married Hispanics

Table 3.5: Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables by Racial Identification for Mexican Americans in the 1990 US Census Language, Nativity, and Race of Spouse

	Racial Identity			Sample Distribution	
	% WHITE	%OTHER		Percent	n
Spanish					
Speak at home	49.5	50.5		81.1	6,596,457
Only English	61.0	39.0		18.9	1,534,001
			Total	100.0	8,130,458
Nativity					
US- Born	57.4	42.6		53.1	4,313,095
Imm. Last 5 yrs.	44.8	55.2		11.5	935,597
Imm. 6-10 yrs.	43.6	56.4		9.3	755,059
Imm. 11-15 yrs.	42.4	57.6		8.6	694,939
Imm. More 15 yrs	47.8	52.2		17.6	1,431,768
			Total	100.0	8,130,458
Race of Spouse					
Hispanic	50.4	49.6		83.5	3,367,191
Non-Hispanic:					
White	65.0	35.0		15.2	613,909
Black	34.5	65.5		0.3	13,249
Asian	41.3	58.8		0.5	18,494
Native American	42.5	57.5		0.3	12,428
Other	14.2	85.8		0.1	5,222
			Total	100.0	4,030,493

Source: 5% PUMS (weighted), 1990
Sample includes: Mexican Americans 18 and older who answer "White" or "Other" for their race.

(+15.9% in 1990, +11.7% in 2000), as were respondents married to non-Hispanic Asians (+9.2% in 1990, +2.6% in 2000), non-Hispanic Native Americans (+7.9% in 1990, +4.5% in 2000), and non-Hispanic Other race persons (+36.2% in 1990, +28.7% in 2000). And in 2000, where marking more than one race was an option, those married to non-Hispanic multiracial persons were also more likely to identify as “Other” compared to those married to Hispanics (+9.4%).

Table 3.6: Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables by Racial Identification for Mexican Americans in the 2000 US Census Language, Nativity, and Race of Spouse

	Racial Identity			Sample Distribution	
	% WHITE	%OTHER		Percent	n
Spanish					
Speak at home	49.5	50.5		82.8	10,035,363
Only English	59.9	40.1		17.2	2,090,122
			Total	100.0	12,125,485
Nativity					
US- Born	57.9	42.1		41.2	4,998,706
Imm. Last 5 yrs.	48.2	51.8		14.3	1,730,067
Imm. 6-10 yrs.	45.8	54.2		10.9	1,319,575
Imm. 11-15 yrs.	44.9	55.2		10.4	1,255,902
Imm. More 15 yrs	46.8	53.2		23.3	2,821,235
			Total	100.0	12,125,485
Race of Spouse					
Hispanic	51.3	48.7		86.1	5,000,832
Non-Hispanic:					
White	65.2	34.8		12.4	719,231
Black	39.6	60.4		0.4	24,210
Asian	48.7	51.3		0.4	25,686
Native American	46.8	53.2		0.3	14,635
Other	22.6	77.4		0.0	1,754
Multiple Race	41.9	58.1		0.4	25,407
			Total	100.0	5,811,755

Source: 5% PUMS (weighted), 2000
Sample includes: Mexican Americans 18 and older who answer "White" or "Other" for their race.

Tables 3.7 and 3.8 show the results of my regression analysis for 1990 and 2000, respectively. Results from Model 1 which includes only basic demographic variables age and sex, suggests a linear relationship between age and identification as “Other” for both 1990 and 2000, such that younger age is associated with greater likelihood of identifying as “Other.” In 1990, the oldest group (55 and older) has 43% lower odds of labeling as “Other” compared to the youngest group (18-24). The age gap in racial identification was larger in 2000 where those 55 and older have 52% lower odds of identifying as “Other”

Table 3.7: Odds Ratios for Models Predicting Racial Identification as "Other" versus "White," Mexican Americans in the 1990 Census

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age				
18-24	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
25-34	0.96***	0.99	0.94***	0.96***
35-44	0.86***	0.89***	0.83***	0.85***
45-54	0.74***	0.72***	0.70***	0.70***
55 or older	0.57***	0.53***	0.55***	0.53***
Sex				
Women	0.93***	0.94***	0.96***	0.96***
Men	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Region				
Southwest			0.87***	0.87***
Non-Southwest			ref.	ref.
Income Quintiles				
1 ($12,000 or less)		ref.		ref.
2 ($12,201-$22,000)		1.12***		1.09***
3 ($22,001-$33,400)		1.13***		1.11***
4 ($33,401-$49,700)		1.13***		1.13***
5 ($49,701 or more)		1.00		1.03**
Education				
Less Than HS		ref.		ref.
High School		0.75***		0.88***
Some College		0.68***		0.82***
College Degree		0.48***		0.59***
Spanish Language				
Speak at Home			1.37***	1.34***
English Only			ref.	ref.
Nativity				
US Born			ref.	ref.
Imm. Last 5 yrs.			1.32***	1.23***
Imm. 6-10 yrs.			1.41***	1.30***
Imm. 11-15 yrs.			1.52***	1.40***
Imm. More 15 yrs.			1.45***	1.38***
Race/Ethnicity of Spouse				
Unmarried			ref.	ref.
Spouse Hispanic			1.05***	1.03***
Spouse non-Hispanic:				
White			0.70***	0.73***
Black			2.25***	2.31***
Asian			1.82***	1.93***
Native American			1.68***	1.69***
Other			7.43***	7.58***
Intercept	0.12***	0.21***	- 0.18***	- 0.11***

n = 399,337

**p<.05, *** p<.0001

Source: 5% PUMS (deflated weight), 1990

Sample includes: Mexican Americans 18 and older who answer "White" or "Other" for their race.

Table 3.8: Odds Ratios for Models Predicting Racial Identification as "Other" versus "White," Mexican Americans in the 2000 Census

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age				
18-24	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
25-34	0.92***	0.94***	0.87***	0.90***
35-44	0.84***	0.86***	0.78***	0.80***
45-54	0.73***	0.74***	0.68***	0.69***
55 or older	0.48***	0.46***	0.45***	0.44***
Sex				
Women	0.94***	0.96***	.97***	.98***
Men	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Region				
Southwest			.96***	0.96***
Non-Southwest			ref.	ref.
Income Quintiles				
1 ($19,000 or less)		ref.		ref.
2 ($19,001-$31,400)		1.09***		1.08***
3 ($32,001-$47,400)		1.15***		1.15***
4 ($47,401-$70,600)		1.17***		1.18***
5 ($70,601 or more)		1.11***		1.12***
Education				
Less Than HS		ref.		ref.
High School		0.80***		0.89***
Some College		0.69***		0.81***
College Degree		0.47***		0.57***
Spanish Language				
Speak at Home			1.30***	1.28***
English Only			ref.	ref.
Nativity				
US Born			ref.	ref.
Imm. Last 5 yrs.			1.16***	1.08***
Imm. 6-10 yrs.			1.35***	1.24***
Imm. 11-15 yrs.			1.47***	1.36***
Imm. More 15 yrs.			1.62***	1.51***
Race/Ethnicity of Spouse				
Unmarried			ref.	ref.
Spouse Hispanic			0.92***	0.92***
Spouse non-Hispanic:				
White			0.69***	0.73***
Black			1.75***	1.82***
Asian			1.25***	1.36***
Native American			1.41***	1.43***
Other			3.58***	3.76***
Multiple Race			1.70***	1.77***
Intercept	0.17***	0.22***	- 0.13***	- 0.10***

n = 582,466

*** p<.0001

Source: 5% PUMS (deflated weight), 2000

Sample includes: Mexican Americans 18 and older who answer "White" or "Other" for their race.

than those in the 18-24 age group. Compared to men, women have lower odds of labeling as "Other," 7% lower in 1990 and 6% lower in 2000. Results by age concur with my hypothesis that increasing age is associated with a decrease in likelihood of identification as "Other." My results from model one also reveal a small gender difference that was unanticipated. Women appear to be slightly less likely than men to identify as "Other." My subsequent models will introduce both socio-economic and assimilation/acculturation variables.

Model 2 includes additional socio-economic variables of income and educational attainment in addition to sex and age. The relationship between age and identification as "Other" holds, and the gap between the youngest age group (18-24) and oldest group (55 and older) actually increases slightly for both years with the introduction of the variables income and education. The relationship between gender and identification also remains after the introduction of these socio-economic variables, but the gender gap decreases slightly in both years.

Results by education reveal that likelihood of identifying as "Other" is lower for those with more education for both 1990 and 2000. Those with a college degree are less likely to identify as "Other" compared to those who did not complete high school, at 52% less likely in 1990 and 53% less likely in 2000. The effect of income is not as pronounced as education. In 1990, those in the lowest and highest income quintiles are least likely to identify as "Other." In 2000, the lowest income quintile is also least likely to identify as "Other," and those in the lowest two income quintiles and highest income quintile are

less likely to check "Other" than the middle income quintiles 3 and 4. In other words, for both years, identification as "Other" appears to highest in the middle income groups. I hypothesized that increasing income and education would be related to lower odds of identification as "Other." Results for education concur with my hypothesis; however, results for income do not. The relationship between income and race appears curvilinear, as those in the lowest and highest income groups are less likely to identify as "Other."

Model 3 includes the basic demographic variables of age and sex, and adds assimilation/acculturation variables: region, Spanish usage, nativity/immigration status, and intermarriage. The relationship between age and identification holds in the assimilation/acculturation model, as does the slight relationship between gender and identification. Results reveal that residence in the Southwest is associated with a decrease in identification as "Other." This was more pronounced in 1990 with 13% lower odds of identifying as "Other" in the Southwest. In 2000, residence in the Southwest was only associated with a 3% decrease in likelihood of identifying as "Other." Speaking Spanish is associated with higher odds of labeling as "Other." In 1990 Spanish-speakers had 37% greater odds of identifying as "Other," and in 2000, they had 30% greater odds of identifying as "Other" compared to non-Spanish speakers. I had hypothesized that both residence in the Southwest and speaking Spanish would be associated with an increase in identification as "Other." But, while results for Spanish language use follow my hypotheses, results regarding residence in the Southwest do not support my hypotheses. Residence in the Southwest is associated with a slight decrease in identification as "Other."

As I hypothesized, U.S.-born persons are less likely to label as "Other" than immigrants. But, there does not appear to be a linear relationship between time elapsed since immigration and decreasing odds of identification as "Other." In 1990, likelihood of identification as "Other" is highest for those who immigrated 11-15 year ago. In 2000, immigrants who came to U.S. over fifteen years ago have the highest odds of identification as "Other. It appears that immigrants with greater lengths of stay in the U.S. are more likely than recent immigrants to identify as "Other."

Results on race of spouse reveal that compared to unmarried respondents, Mexican Americans who are married to non-Hispanic Whites were 30% less likely to label as "Other" in 1990, and 31% less likely to label as "Other" in 2000. Those married to non-Hispanic Whites are least likely to label as "Other." On the other hand, those married to non-Hispanic "Others" were most likely to label as "Other," followed by those married to non-Hispanic Blacks. These results support my hypothesis that those married to non-Hispanic Whites would be less likely to label as "Other" than those married to Hispanics.

Finally, results from the full model (Model 4) include all of the aforementioned variables. Gender differences held, but are small, with women just slightly less likely than men to identify as "Other" in both years (-4% in 1990, -2% in 2000). Mexican Americans in the oldest age group (55 and older) are 47% less likely to identify as "Other" in 1990 compared to those in the youngest age group (18-24). This age gap in identification is larger in 2000 at 56% lower odds for the oldest age group. Residence in the Southwest is associated with a decrease in odds of labeling as "Other" by 13% in

1990. But, in 2000, the effect is much smaller at only 4%. Lower education is associated with identification as "Other" in both years. In 1990, college-educated Mexican Americans are 41% less likely to identify as "Other" compared to those who did not complete high school. The effect is slightly larger in 2000, with college-educated Mexican Americans 43% less likely to identify as "Other." Spanish language use is related to an increase in odds of identifying as "Other" by 34% in 1990 and 28% in 2000. Native-born Mexican Americans are least likely to identify as "Other" in both 1990 and 2000. But, among immigrants, identification as "Other" is higher for immigrants with greater lengths of stay in the U.S.

Overall, my results suggest Mexican Americans who identify as "Other" are more likely to be younger, less educated, foreign-born, living outside of the Southwest, and are more likely to speak Spanish. Furthermore, compared to Mexican Americans who are unmarried and those married to Hispanics, those who are married to non-Hispanic Whites are less likely to label as "Other," while those married to non-Hispanic "Others", Blacks, Asians, and Native Americans are more likely to label as "Other." Thus, the results support most of my hypotheses with the exception of my hypotheses regarding region, income, and the linear relationship between length of stay in the U.S. and identification as "White" for immigrants.

While U.S.-born Mexican Americans were more likely than immigrants to identify as "White," among immigrants a greater number of years since immigration is not related to a decrease in odds of identifying as "Other." Odds of identification as "Other" is actually higher for immigrants with longer stays in the U.S. than it is for recent

immigrants. One explanation for may be that immigrants learn over time in the U.S. that they are not considered "White" by the dominant group, and therefore, are more likely to identify as "Other." U.S.-born respondents, on the other hand, may be more aware of the politics of race in the U.S. and therefore may be more likely to assert "White" identities in the face of racialization by the dominant group, knowing the benefits of such a move.

Also, I had hypothesized that residence in the Southwest, where there is a higher concentration of Mexican-ancestry persons, would be related to an increased likelihood of identifying as "Other." Instead, I find that residence in the Southwest is associated with a slight increase likelihood of identifying as "White." While being in an area with more persons who share one's racial or ethnic background can solidify identification with one's community, larger numbers of a racial or ethnic minority may also lead to greater hostility from the dominant group. In this way "White" identification in the Southwest may be an attempt to assert this identity in response to discrimination and racialization from Anglos.

Finally, the socio-economic variables of income and education yielded very different results. I had hypothesized that both increasing income and education would be associated with lower likelihood of checking "Other." But, while higher education is related to a decrease in likelihood of identification as "Other," higher income was related to an increase in identification as "Other" until the highest income quintile. The relationship between income and identification appears to be curvilinear; those in the lowest income quintile and highest income quintile were less likely than those in the middle income quintiles to label as "Other." Higher income respondents may identify as

"White" because they feel more assimilated socio-economically, while lower income respondents may be asserting "White" identities as a way to compensate for their lower class status. "Whiteness" for lower income respondents may indicate a wish to move up economically, viewing whiteness as the avenue for upward mobility.

While some of these results correspond with the assimilation model that racial/ethnic groups "whiten" with increasing socio-economic status and acculturation, the overall picture depicted by these findings is far more complicated. Evidence suggests that while increasing socio-economic status and native-born status are correlated with identification as "White," those in the most vulnerable positions, recent immigrants and those with lower household incomes, also claim a "White" identity. For those who have achieved higher levels of education and income, whiteness may be viewed as a sign of socio-economic assimilation. On the other hand, for newer immigrants and those in the lower rungs of employment, identification as "White" may represent a desire to be accepted by the dominant society and to move up economically. These patterns suggest that certain groups of Mexican Americans may deploy whiteness for different reasons. I will now shift by focus to an examination of state differences in racial identification, focusing on Texas and California.

Findings at the State Level, Texas and California

After noting striking difference in the racial identification of Mexican Americans between Texas and California, I decided to examine these states separately to explore how factors might work differently in these states. Using the 2000 data, I first examined

the racial distribution of both states. The weighted population for Texas is 3,252,302, and the weighted population for California is 5,233,452.

Table 3.9 details the racial identification of Mexican Americans in Texas, while Table 3.10 shows their distribution in California. Sixty-one percent of Mexican Americans in Texas marked White alone for their race, while 41% of Mexican Americans in California identified as White alone (+20%). In Texas, 35% of the sample identified as Other alone race, compared to 52% in California (-17%). More Mexican Americans in California identified as Native American alone, at 1.2% compared to .5% in Texas. Very small percentages in both states identified as Black alone and Asian/Pacific Islander

Table 3.9: Racial Identification of Mexican Americans in the 2000 US Census TEXAS

	Percent	n
White alone	61.06	1,985,996
Other alone	35.01	1,138,522
Native American alone	0.51	16,484
Black alone	0.27	8,703
Asian or Pacific Islander alone	0.07	2,537
More Than One Race	3.06	100,060
	100.0	3,252,302

Source: 5% PUMS (weighted), 2000

Table 3.10: Racial Identification of Mexican Americans in the 2000 US Census CALIFORNIA

	Percent	n
White alone	41.13	2,152,512
Other alone	52.19	2,731,120
Native American alone	1.21	63,404
Black alone	0.34	18,018
Asian or Pacific Islander alone	0.33	17,274
More Than One Race	4.80	251,124
	100.0	5,233,452

Source: 5% PUMS (weighted), 2000

alone. And 3% of the Mexican American population in Texas, and nearly 5% of the Mexican Americans in California checked more than one race. Overall, over 96% of Mexican Americans in Texas, and 93% of Mexican Americans in California answered White alone or Other alone for their race. Since this study focuses specifically on the distinction between "White" and "Other" and because of the small percentage of Mexican Americans who marked something else, I have selected only those who marked either "White" or "Other." With this stipulation, the weighted populations for Texas and California are now 3,124,518 and 4,883,632, respectively.

Descriptive variables from both Texas (Table 3.11) and California (Table 3.12) samples indicate a relationship between age and identification as "Other," such that younger Mexican Americans are more likely than older Mexican Americans to identify as "Other." In Texas, about 41.5% percent of 18 to 24 year olds identified as "Other," while

Table 3.11: Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables by Racial Identification for Mexican Americans in Texas
Basic Demographic and Socio-economic Variables

	Racial Identity			Sample Distribution	
	% WHITE	%OTHER		Percent	n
Age					
18-24	58.5	41.5		20.3	635,515
25-34	59.7	40.3		26.7	835,373
35-44	62.8	37.2		22.8	712,875
45-54	66.4	33.6		14.3	448,128
55 or older	75.2	24.8		15.8	492,627
			Total	100.0	3,124,518
Sex					
Women	65.0	35.0		49.5	1,547,986
Men	62.2	37.8		50.5	1,576,532
			Total	100.0	3,124,518
Education					
Less Than HS	60.9	39.1		52.3	1,632,494
High School	63.4	36.6		22.4	700,203
Some College	67.0	33.0		18.3	571,434
College Degree	74.6	25.4		7.1	220,387
			Total	100.0	3,124,518
Income Quintiles					
1 ($15,600 or less)	66.6	33.4		19.3	602,361
2 ($15,601-$27,500)	64.4	35.6		19.7	614,931
3 ($27,501-$40,800)	61.2	38.8		20.0	623,420
4 ($40,801-$61,000)	61.4	38.7		20.5	641,840
5 ($61,001 or more)	64.4	35.6		20.6	641,966
			Total	100.0	3,124,518

Source: 5% PUMS (weighted), 2000
Sample includes: Mexican Americans 18 and older who answer "White" or "Other" for their race.

24.8% of those 55 years old identified as “Other” (+16.7%). The gap between the youngest and the oldest age groups was slightly larger in California. In California, 61.7% of 18-24 year olds identified as “Other,” compared to 43.6% of those 55 years or older (+18.1%). Women were slightly less likely than men to identify as “Other” in both Texas (-2.8%) and California (-1.3%).

Table 3.12: Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables by Racial Identification for Mexican Americans in California
Basic Demographic and Socio-economic Variables

	Racial Identity			Sample Distribution	
	% WHITE	%OTHER		Percent	n
Age					
18-24	38.3	61.7		21.3	1,039,005
25-34	42.1	57.9		29.7	1,449,638
35-44	43.9	56.1		23.3	1,137,930
45-54	46.1	53.9		13.0	636,867
55 or older	56.4	43.6		12.7	620,192
			Total	100.0	4,883,632
Sex					
Women	44.7	55.3		48.6	2,374,698
Men	43.5	56.6		51.4	2,508,934
			Total	100.0	4,883,632
Education					
Less Than HS	41.2	58.8		54.4	2,657,054
High School	44.2	55.8		21.0	1,025,567
Some College	48.0	52.0		19.1	931,889
College Degree	58.1	41.9		5.5	269,122
			Total	100.0	4,883,632
Income Quintiles					
1 ($20,800 or less)	42.9	57.1		19.6	957,103
2 ($20,801-$34,900)	42.7	57.3		19.9	969,964
3 ($34,901-$51,100)	42.9	57.1		20.1	979,685
4 ($51,101-$76,100)	44.0	56.0		20.3	988,800
5 ($76,101 or more)	47.8	52.2		20.2	988,080
			Total	100.0	4,883,632

Source: 5% PUMS (weighted), 2000
Sample includes: Mexican Americans 18 and older who answer "White" or "Other" for their race.

Results for educational attainment reveals that for both states, identification as "Other" is more likely among the least educated group. In Texas, 39.1% of Mexican Americans who did not graduate high school identified as "Other," while 25.4% of those who had a college degree identified as "Other" (+13.7%). And in California, the gap between those who did not complete high school and those who were college graduates was slightly larger at 16.9%. Variation by income was not as pronounced, but in Texas, those in the highest and lowest income groups were slightly less likely to identify as

Table 3.13: Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables by Racial Identification for Mexican Americans in Texas
Language, Nativity, and Race of Spouse

	Racial Identity			Sample Distribution	
	% WHITE	%OTHER		Percent	n
Spanish					
Speak at home	63.3	36.7		87.1	2,721,552
Only English	65.4	34.6		12.9	402,966
				100.0	3,124,518
Nativity					
US- Born	67.6	32.4		52.8	1,649,123
Imm. Last 5 yrs.	56.5	43.6		10.8	335,924
Imm. 6-10 yrs.	56.7	43.3		8.2	257,549
Imm. 11-15 yrs.	58.3	41.7		6.8	212,412
Imm. More 15 yrs	61.4	38.6		21.4	669,510
				100.0	3,124,518
Race of Spouse					
Hispanic	64.4	35.6		90.7	1,482,692
Non-Hispanic:					
White	66.2	33.8		8.5	139,066
Black	43.8	56.2		0.3	5,536
Asian	46.8	53.2		0.2	3,005
Native American	59.5	40.5		0.1	1,369
Other	23.0	77.1		0.0	366
Multiple Race	47.1	53.0		0.2	3,528
				100.0	1,635,562

Source: 5% PUMS (weighted), 2000
Sample includes: Mexican Americans 18 and older who answer "White" or "Other" for their race.

"Other" than those in the middle income groups. In California, however, the highest income group was least likely to identify as "Other."

Tables 3.13 and 3.14 show variation by Spanish language use, nativity, and race of spouse for Texas and California, respectively. Only 12.9% of the Texas sample and 18.2% of the California sample did not speak Spanish in the home. This non-Spanish speaking group was less likely than those who spoke Spanish to identify as "Other" in California (-12.6%) and Texas (-2.1). In both states, those who were born in the U.S. were less likely than any of the immigrant groups to identify as "Other." However, no

Table 3.14: Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables by Racial Identification for Mexican Americans in California Language, Nativity, and Race of Spouse

	Racial Identity			Sample Distribution	
	% WHITE	%OTHER		Percent	n
Spanish					
Speak at home	41.8	58.2		81.8	3,995,223
Only English	54.4	45.6		18.2	888,409
				100.0	4,883,632
Nativity					
US- Born	49.3	50.8		37.6	1,834,365
Imm. Last 5 yrs.	43.4	56.7		10.3	500,942
Imm. 6-10 yrs.	40.6	59.4		10.6	519,467
Imm. 11-15 yrs.	40.6	59.4		12.6	612,717
Imm. More 15 yrs	40.4	59.6		29.0	1,416,141
				100.0	4,883,632
Race of Spouse					
Hispanic	43.6	56.4		88.2	1,999,858
Non-Hispanic:					
White	64.3	35.7		10.0	226,537
Black	33.6	66.4		0.4	8,211
Asian	47.5	52.5		0.7	14,750
Native American	42.9	57.1		0.2	5,198
Other	18.9	81.1		0.0	954
Multiple Race	37.2	62.8		0.5	12,179
				100.0	2,267,687

Source: 5% PUMS (weighted), 2000
Sample includes: Mexican Americans 18 and older who answer "White" or "Other" for their race.

distinct pattern by years since immigration is apparent. Finally, in both states, respondents who were married to non-Hispanic Whites were less likely to label as "Other" compared with all other groups. But, in Texas, the difference between those married to Hispanics and those married to non-Hispanic Whites is only 1.8%, while California the gap is 20.7%. Those married to non-Hispanic "Others" and non-Hispanic Blacks were most likely to identify as "Other" in both states.

The results for my regression analysis of Texas and California are presented in Tables 3.15 and 3.16. Model 1 includes the basic demographic variables age and sex. Results for age reveal a relationship between age and identification as "Other" such that identification as "Other" is greater for younger respondents. In Texas, the oldest group (55 and older) is 53% less likely to identify as "Other" compared to the youngest age group (18-24). The gap between the oldest and youngest age groups in California was nearly the same at 53%. Women in Texas are 9% less likely to identify as "Other" compared to men, while in California they are only 3% less likely to identify as "Other." Overall, results from Model 1 are similar to my findings at the national level, and support my hypothesis that older persons are less likely to identify as "Other."

Model 2 includes additional socio-economic variables of income and educational attainment in addition to sex and age. Results for age hold with the introduction of these variables. The age gap in identification between the youngest group (18-24) and oldest group (55 and older) actually increases slightly in both years after controlling for education and income. Women are also still just slightly less likely to identify as "Other." Higher education is related to a decrease in identification as "Other" for both Texas and California. Those with a college degree are less likely to identify as "Other" compared to those who did not complete high school, 53% less likely in Texas and 50% less likely in California.

While age and education yield similar results in Texas and California, the effect of income varies by state. In Texas, likelihood of identifying as "Other" is higher for

Table 3.15: Odds Ratios for Models Predicting Racial Identification as "Other" versus "White," Mexican Americans in the 2000 Census, TEXAS

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age				
18-24	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
25-34	0.95**	0.98	0.92***	0.96**
35-44	0.84***	0.85***	0.81***	0.83***
45-54	0.71***	0.72***	0.70***	0.71***
55 or older	0.47***	0.45***	0.46***	0.46***
Sex				
Women	0.91***	0.94***	0.93***	0.94***
Men	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Income Quintiles				
1 ($15,600 or less)		ref.		ref.
2 ($15,601-$27,500)		1.07***		1.07***
3 ($27,501-$40,800)		1.25***		1.24***
4 ($40,801-$61,000)		1.28***		1.29***
5 ($61,001 or more)		1.23***		1.24***
Education				
Less Than HS		ref.		ref.
High School		0.80***		0.87***
Some College		0.66***		0.73***
College Degree		0.47***		0.52***
Spanish Language				
Speak at Home			1.06***	1.05**
English Only			ref.	ref.
Nativity				
US Born			ref.	ref.
Imm. Last 5 yrs.			1.41***	1.30***
Imm. 6-10 yrs.			1.44***	1.32***
Imm. 11-15 yrs.			1.40***	1.29***
Imm. More 15 yrs.			1.46***	1.35***
Race/Ethnicity of Spouse				
Unmarried			ref.	ref.
Spouse Hispanic			0.96***	0.95***
Spouse non-Hispanic:				
White			1.00	1.08**
Black			2.36***	2.46***
Asian			2.09***	2.33***
Native American			1.31	1.33
Other			6.41***	6.30**
Multiple Race			2.13***	2.25***
Intercept	- 0.30***	- 0.30***	- 0.50***	- 0.50***

n = 146,954

*p<.05, **p,.01,***p<.001

Source: 5% PUMS (deflated weight), 2000

Sample includes: Mexican Americans 18 and older who answer "White" or "Other" for their race.

Table 3.16: Odds Ratios for Models Predicting Racial Identification as "Other" versus "White," Mexican Americans in the 2000 Census, CALIFORNIA

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age				
18-24	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
25-34	0.86***	0.86***	0.81***	0.83***
35-44	0.79***	0.80***	0.73***	0.74***
45-54	0.73***	0.73***	0.66***	0.67***
55 or older	0.48***	0.45***	0.43***	0.42***
Sex				
Women	0.97***	0.98*	0.99	1.00
Men	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Income Quintiles				
1 ($20,800 or less)		ref.		ref.
2 ($20,801-$34,900)		1.00		0.99
3 ($34,901-$51,100)		1.01		1.00
4 ($51,101-$76,100)		1.01		1.01
5 ($76,101 or more)		0.91***		0.93***
Education				
Less Than HS		ref.		ref.
High School		0.83***		0.90***
Some College		0.72***		0.81***
College Degree		0.50***		0.59***
Spanish Language				
Speak at Home			1.46***	1.45***
English Only			ref.	ref.
Nativity				
US Born			ref.	ref.
Imm. Last 5 yrs.			0.96**	0.87***
Imm. 6-10 yrs.			1.13***	1.02
Imm. 11-15 yrs.			1.18***	1.07***
Imm. More 15 yrs.			1.41***	1.30***
Race/Ethnicity of Spouse				
Unmarried			ref.	ref.
Spouse Hispanic			0.96***	0.95***
Spouse non-Hispanic:				
White			0.55***	0.61***
Black			1.68***	1.78***
Asian			1.00	1.11
Native American			1.28*	1.29*
Other			3.60***	3.94***
Multiple Race			1.57***	1.66***
Intercept	0.49***	0.65***	0.15***	.30***

n = 244,204

*p<.05, **p,.01,***p<.001

Source: 5% PUMS (deflated weight), 2000

Sample includes: Mexican Americans 18 and older who answer "White" or "Other" for their race.

for respondents with more income. The group least likely to identify as "Other" is the lowest income quintile. In California, there are no significant differences by income until the highest income quintile. The highest income group is 9% less likely to check "Other" than the lowest income quintile. Thus, while results for education and age were similar in both states and corresponded with my findings at the national level, income does not follow this pattern. At the national level, income appeared to be curvilinear, with those in the lowest and highest income quintiles more likely to identify as "White." Here, we see that likelihood of identification as "Other" is greater for those with higher incomes in Texas. In California, however, income is only minimally related to identification.

Model 3 includes the basic demographic variables of age and sex, and adds assimilation/acculturation variables: region, Spanish usage, nativity/immigration status, and intermarriage. In both states the relationship between age and racial identification holds, with older respondents still less likely to identify as "Other." In California, the gender gap, which was very small to begin with, virtually disappears and looses any statistical significance. In Texas the gender gap holds, with women about 7% less likely than men to identify as "Other."

Here, we see that Texas and California differ in the relationship between nativity and racial identification. In Texas, U.S.-born Mexican Americans are least likely to identify as "Other." In California, the group least likely to identify as "Other" is actually recent immigrants who arrived in the U.S. in the last five years, and likelihood of identification as "Other" is greater for immigrants who have spent more time in the U.S. Another difference between Texas and California is in the effect of speaking Spanish.

Spanish language use is associated with higher odds of labeling as "Other" in both states. However, in Texas Spanish-speakers are only 6% more likely to identify as "Other," while in California Spanish-speakers are 46% more likely to identify as "Other" compared to non-Spanish speakers**.** Results on race of spouse also reveal differences by state. Mexican American respondents who were married to non-Hispanic Whites were 45% less likely to label as "Other" than unmarried respondents in California, but were not significantly different from unmarried respondents in Texas. Those married to non-Hispanic "Others" in both states were most likely to label as "Other," followed by those married to non-Hispanic Blacks**.**

Finally, results from the full model (Model 4) reveal that while Texas and California have similar patterns for the variables age and education, results for sex, income, Spanish language use, nativity, and race of spouse all yielded different results. In both states, older respondents were less likely to check "Other." The oldest group (55 and older) is 54% less likely to check "Other" than those 18-24 in Texas, and 58% less likely to identify as "Other" than those 18-24 in California. Higher education is also associated with decreasing likelihood of identifying as "Other." In Texas, college graduates are 43% less likely to mark "Other" compared to those who did not finish high school. In California, college graduates are 41% less likely to check "Other" than those who did not graduate high school. These results are both similar to the results for at the national level. However, the national-level analysis masked a number of differences in factors associated with racial identification that appear to vary significantly by state.

First, in Texas women are 6% less likely than men to identify as "Other" race, while in California there are no significant differences by gender. This gender difference, however, is fairly small. Second, income operates differently in Texas than it does in California. In Texas, increasing income is associated with an increased likelihood of identifying as "Other" until the 5th income quintile. The lowest income group is least likely to check "Other" race. In California, there are no significant differences for income until the highest income group, which is 6% less likely to mark "Other" than the lowest income group. In other words, income differences in racial identification are only minimal in California. Third, Spanish language is associated with a 45% increase in odds of labeling as "Other" in California, but is only associated with a 5% increase of likelihood of identifying as "Other" in Texas. Fourth, nativity also operates differently in Texas vs. California. In Texas, U.S.- born respondents are least likely to mark "Other." In California, immigrants who arrived within the last five years are least likely to identify as "Other." The most recent immigrant group in California is 13% less likely to mark "Other" compared to native-born Mexican Americans. Finally, marriage to a non-Hispanic White person in Texas is actually associated with a slightly higher probability of identifying as "Other," whereas in California it is associated with lower odds of identifying as "Other."

There are a number of possible explanations for these differences. Texas and California vary considerably in both the composition of the Mexican ancestry population, in their geography, and in their political climates. In California, a much larger proportion of the Mexican-ancestry population is foreign-born. This means not only that there are

more immigrants, but also far more second generation Mexican Americans. In Texas, where the Mexican-ancestry population is not overwhelmingly foreign-born, proportionally there are greater numbers of Mexican Americans who are third generation and beyond. While I am able to control for respondents nativity status (U.S. born vs. immigrants of various arrival times), the census does not include variables on generational status. Some of these differences may reflect the different composition of the Texas and California Mexican-ancestry populations. Another crucial difference between California and Texas is geography, specifically, the possible role of proximity to the U.S.-Mexico border. Only two counties in California border Mexico, whereas over a dozen counties in Texas are along the border. Research on the construction of identity for Mexican Americans has noted the salience of the border in the identity formation for Mexican Americans (Vila 2000, Anzaldúa 1987).

Texas and California also have very different political climates. While there are certainly anti-immigrant sentiments in Texas, California has experienced an intense political backlash against immigrants. In the early 1990's, California's proposition 187 proposed to save the state from an overwhelming tide of illegal immigration by denying basic rights of education and health care to illegal immigrants. The continued negative political commentary regarding the increasing foreign-born population in California has been the subject of several studies analyzing anti-immigrant media coverage in California (Santa Ana 2002, Inda 2002). With such a hostile environment, this may explain why new immigrants in California may be more likely to identify as "White" as they attempt to combat this negativity.

Conclusions

Results from my analysis of both 1990 and 2000 Census data for the U.S., and the states of Texas and California for 2000 reveal that examining the racial identification of Mexican Americans at the national level masked a number of state differences. While as hypothesized, increasing age and education are associated with greater likelihood of identification as "White" at both the national and state levels, other variables of gender, income, nativity, language, and race of spouse operated differently in Texas and California. These results suggest the need to focus on specific regional politics of identification. My next chapter explores the racial identification of Mexican Americans in multiple communities in Texas.

Chapter 4: Where's "Hispanic"? Mexican American Responses to the Census Race Question

Introduction

The title of this chapter represents the most common response I received when I asked my interviewees to answer the census race question. "Where's Hispanic?" they would inquire. It is clear that most of my interviewees were accustomed to having a box for "Hispanic" or "Mexican American" to check as a racial option on bureaucratic forms for job and school applications, medical documents, etc. And having been so accustomed to a "Hispanic" option, they looked perplexed by its absence on the list of racial options on the census. A few people even insisted that "Hispanic" had been on the census form they had received, "It was not like this," one woman argued. Most interviewees did not remember filling out their census forms in either 1990 or 2000. So for the majority of my respondents, it was as if they were encountering the form for the first time.

This chapter details the finding from my interviews with Mexican Americans in five Texas cities. My sample consists of fifty-two interviews with Mexican Americans in Texas that were conducted from 2002 to 2004. Focusing specifically on Texas contributes substantially to the discourse on Latina/o identity. Previous studies on this topic of racial vs. ethnic identity have involved interviews with Latinos in the Northeast (Rodriguez 1992). Mexican Americans comprise about two-thirds of the Latino population in the U.S., and the vast majority of Mexican-ancestry persons live in the Southwest, approximately one in four residing in Texas (Guzman 2001).

The Interview Sites

The five locations for my interviews are: Dallas/Fort Worth, Austin, San Antonio, Del Rio, and Mission/McAllen. These locations were selected to ensure a diverse sample with residents in large and small cities, and in various regions of Texas including the areas along the U.S.-Mexico border. Using the Census 2000 Summary File 1, which provides the 100% count of various racial and ethnic groups, I was able to compute the racial composition of each of these sites. I calculated the percent Latino and the percentages of non-Hispanic: White alone, Black alone, Native American alone, Asian or Pacific Islander alone, Other Race alone, and Multiple Race. While I am not able to calculate the racial distribution of Mexican Americans specifically at the city level, I am able to compute the racial distribution of the Latino/Hispanic population for each area. And because the Latino population in each area is primarily Mexican, this can be used to get the approximate racial identification of Mexican Americans in each site.

Table 4.1 National Origin Distribution of Latinos for Each Interview Site

City	Mexican	Puerto Rican	Cuban	Dominican	Central Am	South Am	Other
Dallas	82.94%	0.56%	0.54%	0.05%	3.54%	0.69%	11.68%
Fort Worth	83.39%	1.19%	0.38%	0.07%	0.99%	0.57%	13.42%
Austin	76.71%	1.26%	0.71%	0.06%	2.14%	1.08%	18.04%
San Antonio	70.51%	1.16%	0.22%	0.04%	0.52%	0.34%	27.21%
Del Rio	85.53%	0.28%	0.09%	0.01%	0.14%	0.05%	13.90%
Mission	82.88%	0.33%	0.07%	0.04%	0.17%	0.17%	16.34%
McAllen	81.86%	0.43%	0.23%	0.07%	0.31%	0.41%	16.68%

Source: Census Summary File 1, 2000

Table 4.1 details the national origin distribution for the Latino population for each city. The Latino populations in Dallas, Fort Worth, Del Rio, Mission, and McAllen are all over 80% Mexican ancestry. Austin's Latino population is approximately 77% Mexican-origin, while San Antonio's Latino population is about 71% Mexican. The second largest "group" of Latinos in each city is "Other Latino/Hispanic." This group is composed of persons who answered "Spanish," "Spaniard," or other unspecified "Hispanic." It is possible that many of these may also be persons of Mexican ancestry whose families date back several generations, and who because of the length of time their ancestry dates back in the U.S., do not identify themselves as Mexican-origin. Other groups of Latinos represented in these cities include Central Americans, who comprise 3.5% of Latinos in Dallas and 2.1% of Latinos in Austin, and Puerto Ricans who account for 1.2% of Latinos in San Antonio and Fort Worth, and 1.3% of Latinos in Austin. But overall, the overwhelming majority of the Latino population in each of these sites is Mexican-origin. Thus, examining the racial distribution of Latinos in each area will provide a close estimate of the racial identification of Mexican Americans in these locations.

Dallas/Fort Worth

Table 4.2 shows the population racial characteristics of the Dallas/Fort Worth area. The cities of Dallas and Fort Worth, located in North Texas, comprise one of the largest metropolitan areas in the state of Texas. The two cities combined populations amount to 1.7 million persons, and the greater Dallas/Fort Worth CMSA, including

Table 4.2, Dallas/Fort Worth

Race and Hispanic Origin,	DALLAS		FORT WORTH	
	Percent	n	Percent	n
HISPANIC:	35.55	422,587	29.81	159,368
NON-HISPANIC:				
White alone	34.56	410,777	45.81	244,966
Black alone	25.65	304,824	20.01	106,988
Native American alone	0.31	3,705	0.34	1,828
Asian or Pacific Islander alone	2.69	31,993	2.65	14,148
Other Race	0.11	1,254	0.10	523
More Than One Race	1.13	13,440	1.29	6,873
	100.0	1,188,580	100.0	534,694

Table, 4.3, Dallas/Fort Worth

Hispanic Racial Identification,	DALLAS		FORT WORTH	
	Percent	n	Percent	n
White alone	45.77	193,432	46.55	74,193
Black alone	0.74	3,133	0.83	1,322
Native American alone	0.65	2,767	0.83	1,316
Asian or Pacific Islander alone	0.17	715	0.19	298
Other Race	48.19	203,629	46.80	74,577
More Than One Race	4.48	18,911	4.81	7,662
	100.0	422,587	100.0	159,368

Source: Census Summary File 1, 2000

suburban areas, increases that population to a total of 5.2 million. The Dallas/Fort Worth CMSA actually contains approximately 18% of the Mexican-ancestry population in the state. That is, about 1 out of every 6 persons of Mexican ancestry in Texas lives in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. This area is primarily urban, and racially diverse. Dallas is about 36% Latino, and 35% non-Hispanic White. Fort Worth is approximately 30% Latino and

46% non-Hispanic White. Both cities also have sizable African American populations, 26% in Dallas and 20% in Fort Worth. And Asian Americans account for about 3% of the population in both cities. Examining the racial identification of Latinos in the area (Table 4.3), I find that the percentage who marked "White" in Dallas and Fort Worth (46% and 47%, respectively) is lower than the percentage of Mexican American respondents who marked "White" in the state of Texas (61%). Forty-eight percent of Latinos in Dallas, and 47% of Latinos in Fort Worth identified as "Other" race.

Table 4.4, Austin

Race and Hispanic Origin

	Percent	n
HISPANIC:	30.55	200,579
NON-HISPANIC:		
White alone	52.94	347,554
Black alone	9.79	64,259
Native American alone	0.28	1,854
Asian or Pacific Islander alone	4.71	30,915
Other Race	0.19	1,243
More Than One Race	1.55	10,158
	100.0	656,562

Source: Census Summary File 1, 2000

Table 4.5, Austin

Hispanic Racial Identification

	Percent	n
White alone	40.66	81,546
Black alone	0.85	1,697
Native American alone	1.01	2,035
Asian or Pacific Islander alone	0.26	514
Other Race	52.50	105,295
More Than One Race	4.73	9,492
	100.0	200,579

Source: Census Summary File 1, 2000

Austin

Table 4.4 details the population and racial composition of Austin. The city of Austin, the state capitol, is located in Central Texas. Austin is another large urban setting with a population of 656, 562 in the city, and population total of just over 1.2 million in the greater Austin MSA. Thirty-one percent of the Austin population is Latino, and 53% of the population is non-Hispanic White. Austin is also about 10% African American, and approximately 5% Asian American. Examining the racial identification of Latinos in Austin (Table 4.5), I find that the percentage who marked "White" is about 41%. This is also much lower than the percentage of Mexican respondents who marked "White" in the state of Texas (61%). About 53% of Latinos in Austin checked "Other" for their race.

Table 4.6, San Antonio

Race and Hispanic Origin

	Percent	n
HISPANIC:	58.66	671,394
NON-HISPANIC:		
White alone	31.83	364,357
Black alone	6.53	74,778
Native American Alone	0.23	2,666
Asian or Pacific Islander alone	1.55	17,748
Other Race	0.10	1,182
More Than One Race	1.09	12,521
	100.0	1,144,646

Table 4.7, San Antonio

Hispanic Racial Identification

	Percent	n
White alone	61.12	410,351
Black alone	0.50	3,342
Native American Alone	1.03	6,918
Asian or Pacific Islander alone	0.19	1,253
Other Race	32.79	220,180
More Than One Race	4.37	29,350
	100.0	671,394

Source: Census Summary File 1, 2000

San Antonio

Table 4.6 shows the population characteristics of San Antonio. San Antonio is typically said to be the northern border of South Texas. The city is located about 90 miles

south of Austin. And with a population of 1.1 million, San Antonio is the largest urban area in South Texas. San Antonio is about 59% Latino, 32% non-Hispanic White. The city is also about 7% African American, and nearly 2% Asian American. The racial identification of Latinos in San Antonio (Table 4.7) was closer to the state distribution with 61% of Latinos identifying as White and 33% identifying as "Other" race.

Table 4.8, Del Rio

Race and Hispanic Origin	**Percent**	**n**
HISPANIC:	81.04	27,446
NON-HISPANIC:		
White alone	16.68	5,648
Black alone	1.00	339
Native American alone	0.25	83
Asian or Pacific Islander alone	0.49	167
Other Race	0.05	16
More Than One Race	0.50	168
	100.0	33,867

Source: Census Summary File 1, 2000

Del Rio

Table 4.8 details the population and racial distribution of Del Rio. Del Rio is located on the Mexican border about 180 miles directly west of San Antonio. Del Rio is across the border from Acuña, Mexico. The city population total is 33,867 persons. Eighty-one percent of Del Rio residents are Latino, and about 18% are non-Hispanic

White. Like most border towns in South Texas, the population is overwhelmingly Mexican-origin with a smaller percentage of Anglos. However, Del Rio has a military

Table 4.9, Del Rio

Hispanic Racial Identification

	Percent	n
White alone	74.54	20,457
Black alone	0.26	70
Native American alone	0.56	153
Asian or Pacific Islander alone	0.07	19
Other Race	21.89	6,008
More Than One Race	2.69	739
	100.0	27,446

Source: Census Summary File 1, 2000

base that draws in other populations, including African Americans and Asian Americans. Thus, the town is 1% African American and .5% Asian American. While the percentages of these groups are still quite small, the town is more diverse than most border towns in South Texas, most of which typically have less than .5% African American populations. Examining the racial distributions of Latinos in Del Rio (Table 4.9), I find that 75% of Latinos in Del Rio identified as "White" on the census, and only 22% identified as "Other."

Mission/McAllen

The cities Mission and McAllen are located in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. The Valley is a four-county, largely Mexican-origin area along the southern tip of

Table 4.10, Mission/McAllen

Race and Hispanic Origin,	MISSION		MCALLEN	
	Percent	n	Percent	n
HISPANIC:	81.03	36,794	80.28	85,427
NON-HISPANIC:				
White alone	17.69	8,033	16.84	17,924
Black alone	0.25	115	0.46	487
Native American alone	0.08	37	0.11	112
Asian or Pacific Islander alone	0.59	268	1.90	2,025
Other Race	0.03	13	0.04	42
More Than One Race	0.33	148	0.37	397
	100.0	45,408	100.0	106,414

Table 4.11, Mission/McAllen

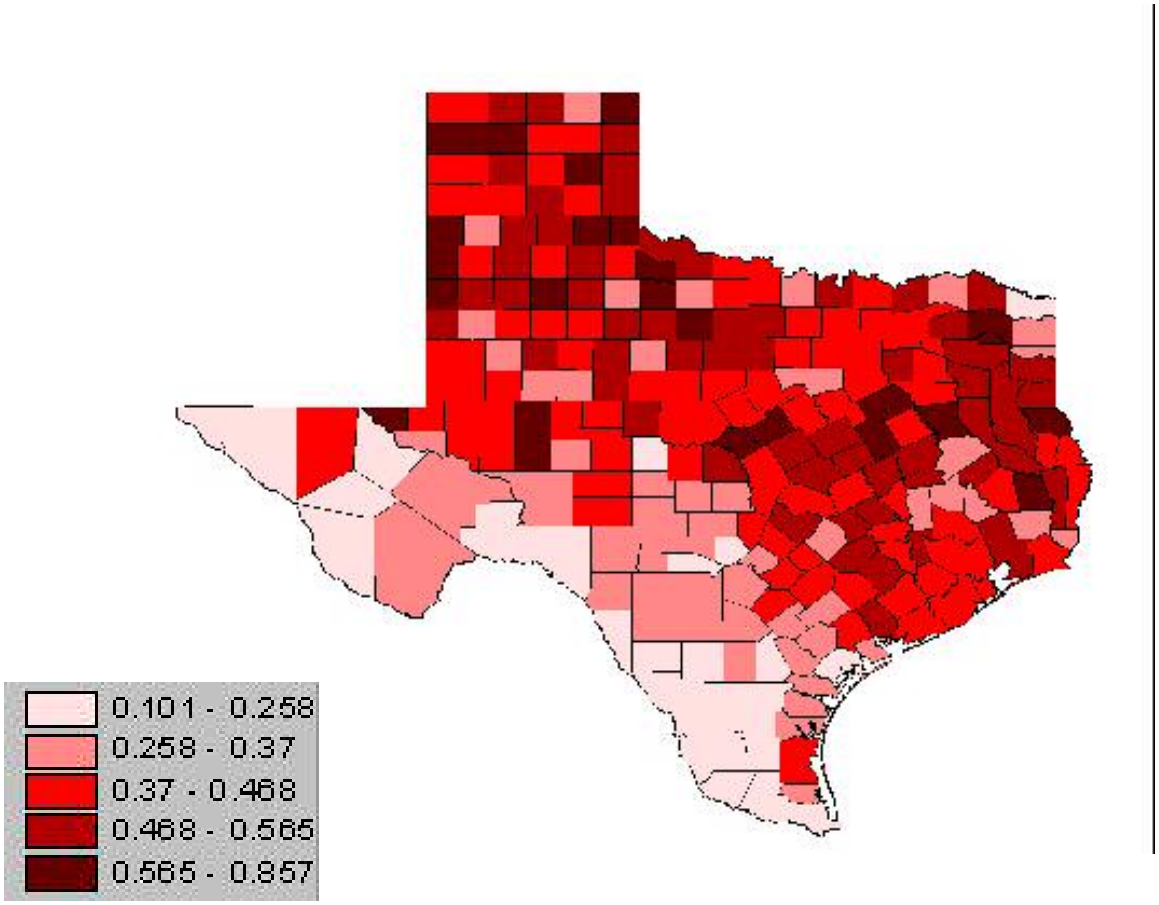
Hispanic Racial Identification,	MISSION		MCALLEN	
	Percent	n	Percent	n
White alone	73.97	27,216	76.75	65,567
Black alone	0.14	53	0.19	160
Native American alone	0.37	137	0.37	317
Asian or Pacific Islander alone	0.06	23	0.09	75
Other Race	22.97	8,452	19.69	16,822
More Than One Race	2.48	913	2.91	2,486
	100.0	36,794	100.0	85,427

Source: Census Summary File 1, 2000

Texas. Mission and McAllen are located on the border, across from Reynosa, Mexico. Mission and McAllen are in Hidalgo County, one of the poorest counties in the country. Hidalgo County is also one of the largest home bases for Mexican migrant workers in the country. Table 4.10 details the racial composition of Mission and McAllen. Both cities are composed of mostly Latinos, at 81% of the population in Mission, and 80% of the McAllen population. The non-Hispanic White populations in Mission and McAllen are approximately 18% and 17%, respectively. And both cities have small but notable Asian American population, .6% in Mission and nearly 2% in McAllen. The racial identification of Latinos in the Mission/McAllen (Table 4.11) areas was similar to Del Rio, 74% of Latinos in Mission and 77% of Latinos in McAllen reported their race as "White." Only about 23% of Latinos in Mission, and 20% of Latinos in McAllen identified themselves as "Other" on the census race question.

Overall, examining the racial composition of Latinos in each site reveals that Latinos in the border towns of Mission, McAllen, and Del Rio are much more likely to label as "White" on the census than Latinos in the North Texas and Central Texas areas. At 61% "White," the Latino population in San Antonio was closer to the state's overall racial distribution of Latinos. To further explore the racial identification of Latinos in the state of Texas, I used county-level data for Texas from the Census 2000 Summary File 1 and mapped the proportion of Latinos in each county who identified as "Other" racially. Figure 4.1 shows the results. The darker areas are places where a higher proportion of the Latino population identified as "Other" race alone. Lighter areas indicate less

Figure 4.1 Racial Identification of the Hispanic/Latino Population for Counties in Texas: Proportion Who Identified as "Other" Race



Source: Census 2000 Summary File 1

identification as "Other," and more identification as "White."[21] Most counties along the border have a much lower proportion of Latinos who identified as "Other" race (.101 to .258). That is, only 10-26% of Latinos in the border towns identified as "Other" race. My

[21] Because approximately 94% of the Hispanic/Latino population in Texas identified as "Other" race alone or White race alone, a lower proportion of "Other" race identification in the county can be read as more identification as "White."

results at the county level for Texas clearly show a pattern where Latinos along the border are less likely to identify as "Other" than those in counties further from the U.S.-Mexico border. My interviews will explore these regional differences in racial identification of Mexican Americans in Texas. Interviewing persons from both large, more racially diverse urban areas, and persons from smaller largely Mexican-origin communities along the border, I will be able to gain insight into the way in which racial identities are constructed in particular contexts.

Methods: The Interviews

My respondents were gathered from several sources: community organizations and events, churches, and local gathering places. I asked respondents to give me the name of another Mexican American person to be interviewed. Thus, the sample is a "snowball" sample that includes both those who participate in community events, and those who may not be involved in such public spaces. I only interviewed one person per household (never spouses or children of respondents), and made every effort to ensure a diverse sample by drawing from multiple sources and contacts. In comparison to other studies that focus on specific high schools, colleges, or rely a specific organization for their samples, a snowball sample such as this allows for much variation in age, socio-economic status, nativity, and political affiliations.

Aware that the background of the interviewer may influence responses, I identified myself before each interview as of Mexican ancestry, born and raised in Texas.

I wanted to mark myself as an insider, a member of the community, but did not want to influence their responses by using a label such as “Mexican American” or “Chicana.” Family and community ties in each of these sites further helped to locate myself as an insider. I felt as though my interviewees felt comfortable speaking with me, often divulging very personal information about their lives.

Respondents were shown both the 1990 and 2000 Census forms and informed that while they appear similar, they could only mark one race in 1990, but could mark more than one race in 2000. They were asked what they would answer and why (for each year) for themselves, and for other family members in the household. I was also interested in moving beyond the census racial options to examine the labels they prefer to use in their day-to-day lives, and whether these labels corresponded with what they checked or wrote in on the census form. I asked each person whether the label they selected for their race was the term that they would normally use to identify themselves. (e.g. You checked “White.” Is that the most common term you would use to describe yourself? If not, is there another term you use more frequently?). I then asked respondents about a list of terms that are commonly used to describe people of Mexican ancestry in the U.S.: Mexican, Mexicano or Mexicana, Mexican American, Latino or Latina, Hispanic, Chicano or Chicana, and Tejano or Tejana. I asked my respondents to tell me who each word described, and whether they would use that term to label themselves (e.g. Who is Mexican? Are you Mexican?).

The interviews consisted of both basic demographic information about the respondents and their family/personal migration history, and open-ended interview

questions about the role of family/social networks, Spanish language use, physical appearance, and other factors associated with racial/ethnic identity. I took notes on respondents' physical appearance, including skin color and presence of other cues such as accents. I asked detailed questions about how they were perceived and categorized by others. I asked, "If you were waking down the street here in town and someone were to see you, do you think that person would know that you are Hispanic/Mexican/Mexican American (using their preferred label)? Has anyone ever asked you to identify your racial or ethnic background? Do you feel you have ever been discriminated against or treated differently because of your racial or ethnic background?" These questions allowed me to explore the role physical appearance and experiences with discrimination in their identifications.

Interviews were conducted in English or in Spanish, whichever language was most comfortable for the respondent. Most respondents interviewed in English, or predominantly English with some Spanish words or phrases. Six interviews were conducted completely in Spanish. The interviews were recorded for transcription and pseudonyms were given to ensure anonymity. I interviewed eight to twelve people in each of the five sites, for a total of fifty-two interviews. I have twelve interviews from Mission/McAllen, twelve from Del Rio, ten from San Antonio, ten from Austin, and eight from the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

The sample includes 25 men and 27 women. Ages of my respondents ranged from 18 to 78, with a mean age off 44 years. Ten respondents or 19% of the sample were between the ages of 18 and 29, six were in their 30's (12%), ten were in their 40's (19%),

thirteen were in their 50's (25%), eight were in their 60's (15%), and five were in their 70's (10%). The sample is also diverse in terms of educational attainment. Six respondents or 12% of the sample had not graduated high school, and seventeen had graduated high school or passed the GED, but did not go on to college (33%). Thirteen respondents or 25% of the sample had taken some college classes, but had not completed a degree. And sixteen respondents or 31% of the sample had graduated college. Of these sixteen college graduates, six went on to pursue a master's degree. Four of these respondents with graduate degrees had worked or were currently employed in school administration or teaching at the high school level, and had master's degrees in education-related fields. One respondent was a business owner who also had an education-related master's degree, and one woman had a master's degree in computer programming and was currently unemployed. Overall, the sample was very diverse in terms of educational and occupational characteristics. I interviewed persons employed in lower level employment sectors including construction, food service, housekeeping, manufacturing, and utility repair. The sample also includes persons employed in sales, secretarial jobs, and managerial positions, as well as police officers, teachers, nurses, and business owners.

I interviewed both immigrants and native-born Mexican Americans, including persons from a range of generational backgrounds. I interviewed nine persons who were born in Mexico or 17% of the sample. Two of these nine respondents came to the U.S. with their parents as children, and were raised primarily in the U.S. Seven immigrated here as adults. In addition to these nine respondents who were born in Mexico, I

interviewed four other respondents (8% of the sample) who were born in the U.S. but were raised primarily in Mexico. Two of these respondents then immigrated to the U.S. as adults, and two grew up on the border, living on both the U.S. and Mexican sides.

Classifying respondents by generational status was complicated in some situations like this, and also because many respondents were from parents or grandparents of different generational statuses. That is, for example a woman with a mother who is a Mexican immigrant and a father is third generation Mexican American.[22] During my analysis I provide detailed information about respondents' generational status, including both parent's information. However, for the purpose of presenting the generational distribution of the sample here, I have simplified them into categories based on the most recent immigrant background. That is, if one parent is an immigrant, I counted that person as second generation. Fifteen respondents or 29% of the sample were second generation Mexican American, born in the U.S. with at least one immigrant parent. I also interviewed fifteen respondents (29%) who were third generation, born in the U.S. of U.S.-born parents with at least one grandparent born in Mexico. And finally, nine respondents or 17% of the sample were fourth generation or beyond. That is, all of the respondents' grandparents were born in the U.S. Overall this sample of persons from various generational statuses, age groups, educational backgrounds, and occupations provides me with a diverse group with which to explore the influences of these multiple factors in racial identification.

[22] Eighteen respondents, or 35% were from parents or grandparents of multiple generational statuses.

Findings: Unraveling the Complexities

All respondents chose to answer either "White" or "Other." Sixteen or 31% of the sample identified as "White," while thirty-six or 69% identified as "Other" on the 2000 census.[23] No one marked more than one race. Also, with one exception, all respondents checked or wrote in the same race for their spouse/partner (if the partner was Latino), and wrote the same for their biological children as they did for themselves.[24] Most did not remember filling out either the 1990 or 2000 census forms, and answered the same for both years.[25] Of the thirty-six "Other" race responses, fifteen wrote in "Hispanic," nine labeled as "Mexican American," and four chose to write in "Mexican." Three other respondents chose to put other Hispanic identifiers including, "Mexicano," "Chicana," and "Mestizo." And one man, an immigrant from a rural area in Mexico, chose to write in "Campesino," identifying himself as a field worker. Finally, four respondents chose to write in an "Other" race response indicating that they were "American."

Respondents were asked why they identified as they did. Answers to this question were complicated, often resulting in multiple convoluted explanations. For example, Irene is a sixty year-old business owner in Del Rio. Irene was raised on the Mexican side of town, in the barrio of San Felipe. Although her parents' had little formal education,

[23] This number is considerably larger than the percentage who marked "Other" in my quantitative data analysis of Texas. But, this interview sample is not a random representative sample of the entire state of Texas. Some of this may be chance. I just happened to interview more "Other" race respondents. I also must acknowledge the possibility of an interviewer effect. While my identity as a Mexican American woman from Texas was instrumental in gaining access and rapport with my interviewees, there is the possibility that they may have been less likely to identify as "White" with a Mexican American interviewer.
[24] One respondent, a recent immigrant, wrote "Mexicano" for himself and "Norteamericana" for his wife and daughter who were both born in the U.S.
[25] Only three persons remembered marking something different in 1990 than they did in 2000. All other respondents said they would answer the question the same on both the 1990 and 2000 forms.

Irene went to college and even completed a master's degree. When asked what she would mark for her race, she replied:

> White…There's no such thing as a brown race. They call Hispanic people brown, right? But we are White… Ignorance is the only thing that would cause anybody to check anything else but White, because that's what we are. We are not yellow, we are not black, we are not brown. There is no such thing as brown. All my children are fairer than you are with blue eyes. Are they brown? No, of course not. We've been here too long. We're just Americans. I mean I do not ever say that I'm Mexican. And the Mexicans hate us anyway.

Irene provides a number of different reasons for her response to the race question. First, she cites a biological explanation, "There is no such thing as a brown race." Next, she alludes to the role of education, "Ignorance is the only thing" that would lead to checking something other than White. Irene sees herself as a high-achiever, and at times throughout the interview seemed to link whiteness with education. Irene was also one of only a few respondents who mentioned skin color as a part of her initial explanation for selecting her race. She says her daughters are very fair, "Are they brown? No, of course not!" Irene herself had very light brown skin, and she noted that her husband (also of Mexican ancestry) was much lighter than she with blue eyes. This also seemed to contribute to her identification as White.

In addition to biology, education, and skin color explanations, Irene adds generational status and tensions with Mexican nationals, and Mexican Americans. Irene's family dates back six generations in Del Rio. "We've been here too long. We're just Americans," she said. She says she is "just American" and this is also why she would check "White." American identity is linked to whiteness for her. She went on to discuss

the lack of acceptance she feels from Mexicans in her interactions with Mexican nationals, and persons of Hispanic ancestry in general. Irene states:

> The people that have helped me the most have not been the Hispanic people. In fact, it is just the opposite. The Hispanic traditionally in most environments will try to pull you down. You know that crab theory—that joke. It is very real. The success of my business has not been because of the Hispanic people. They are the ones who want to pull you down. They don't want you driving a Cadillac…The Hispanic people are still very Indian in this sense. The Indian in us wants to get to the front of the line because there is the lack of culture. The fact that the Spanish and French came to Mexico and intermingled with the Indian—it wasn't that long ago. And we are still behind in terms of culture. The Hispanic people get jealous of others in terms of their accomplishments.

Irene used a combination of biology and culture (the distinction between which was rather blurred for her) to explain how she feels that Hispanic people do not value higher achievement, and thus do not accept her. Throughout the interview she linked Spanish or European ancestry with ideas of educational and cultural progress. Thus, her identification as "White" was also a desire to align herself with her European ancestry, and distance herself in some way from Hispanic people who she feels do not accept her success.

Irene is an excellent example of the complex set of factors that influence racial identification; however, unlike Irene most respondents did not associate such negative images with their Hispanic/Mexican American/Mexican identities. For most respondents who selected "White," this was not a rejection of their Mexican ancestry or such an overt indication of aspiring towards European or Anglo identities. But as Irene's case demonstrates, respondents' answers to the question "Why White?" or "Why Other?"

often revealed much about their understanding the of the U.S. racial order and their place in it.

There were eight types of responses that were used alone or combination by my interviewees to explain their racial identification. I will begin my analysis by detailing these eight themes, in a section I have titled "Explanations for Racial Selection: Why White or Other?" I will then move to an analysis of "Factors Influencing Racial Choice," which includes sections focusing on the role of generational status and proximity to the U.S.-Mexico border, physical appearance and discrimination, and membership in political organizations.

Explanations for Racial Selection: Why "White" or "Other"?

"White" Because I'm American

For some respondents, whiteness was linked to American identity. Forty-five year old Miguel was born and raised in Mission. As a child, he and his family would migrate seasonally to pick crops. Miguel has a dark brown complexion, speaks Spanish fluently, has primarily Mexican American social networks, and works as a janitor. When asked what he would put for his race he replied, "White. 'Cause I'm an American, right?" When I asked about other labels (Mexican, Mexicano, Mexican American, Hispanic, Latino, Chicano, or Tejano), Miguel said that "American" was the only term he would use to describe himself.

Lupe works as a nurse in Mission, but was raised in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. Her mother, a U.S.-born Mexican American married a Mexican man in Nuevo Laredo, but

she went across the border to Laredo, Texas to give birth to Lupe. Lupe moved to the United States as an adult looking for work. She has a light-brown/olive complexion and (dyed) blonde hair, but her strong accent clearly marks her as a Spanish-speaker. When asked how others label her, she said, "Everyone knows I'm Mexican." Lupe also said that "Mexican" is the most common term she would use to describe herself. But in response to the census race question, Lupe said, "White. I'm half, half American. My mother is American, but my father is Mexican." Although her mother is Mexican American, she is still American--and therefore White. For these respondents marking "White" on the form meant indicating their "American" identity.

Other evidence of the equation of whiteness with American identity, was a slippage that occurred among a number of respondents in these border towns between the word "Anglo" (meaning non-Hispanic White) and the word "American." For example, in response to a question regarding friendship networks, one of my interviewees remarked, "most of my friends are Mexican ancestry, but I have a few American friends." He further specified that these "Anglo" friends were people he had met through work. In this way, respondents would at times use the word "American" only to refer to Anglos, and in so doing exclude themselves from the definition of American, along with other groups such as Asian Americans and African Americans. While the slippage between "Anglo" and "American" occurred only occasionally for some interviewees, respondents almost always used the word "White" interchangeably with the word "Anglo" throughout the interview. This was true of both those who selected "Other" and those who marked "White" for their race. Thus, while identifying themselves as "White 'cause I'm

American," respondents would routinely exclude themselves from both these identities, using the terms "White" and "American" to refer to Anglos only.

"White" Because I'm Caucasian

Some respondents have relied on primarily biological responses for choosing to identify as "White." These responses have largely been from persons who are at least third generation Mexican American, and who are more educated, having taken some college courses or graduated college. For example, Mari is a fifty-eight year old teacher in Fort Worth who was raised on the border in Laredo. Her mother is a second generation Mexican American, and her father's family dates back several generations in the Laredo area. When asked how she would fill out the census form, she said, " White…because I'm Caucasian and that includes all brown people." "All Brown people?" I asked her. "Well, no," she said, "I mean as long as they're Caucasian." When I asked for further clarification it became evident that her distinction was between "Black" and everyone else.

While Mari said that she would check "White" on the census, she said that she would typically use "Mexican American" or "Hispanic" to describe herself. But, when asked if she would prefer to have either of those terms as racial options on the census form, she said, "No, because I think that you should be able to be taken for your own value—not just what your last name is." Mari had a disdain for racial or ethnic questions on forms in general. She questioned the need for such information. She remarked, "I'm just saying that it does not matter as far as intelligence, if you are a good worker. We

should all work for things." Mari who has a college degree and teaches middle school children, felt that education was more important than race in defining people. This is a belief that she tries to instill in her students. As a matter of fact, she told me that she reminds her students before they take all standardized tests that the race question on the form is optional. She proudly stated that the people at the administration office always know that it's her students' exams when no one in the class answered the race question.

Mari had actually experienced a number of incidents of racial discrimination throughout her lifetime, including at the school where she teaches. She had hostile encounters with parents and administrators that she attributed to her identity as a "Mexican" woman. She said, "Because I'm Mexican and I don't deny it. And that is the thing—that I don't make it a quiet thing. My children [in my class] know, and they know I speak Spanish. I speak Spanish to them sometimes." But while detailing accounts of multiple encounters with racists, Mari maintained, "I've always thought that I was of the Caucasian race, of the White race. I've never thought that I was not White." Defining whiteness in opposition to blackness, Mari maintained that she is White because she is Caucasian, *and* because she is not Black.

Carl, who lives in Del Rio where he was born and raised, also checked "White" citing a biological racial binary between Black and White. He remarked, "I think here in the United States you [are] either Black or White and basically those are the only two races." Carl believes that in the context of U.S. race relations, a person is either White or Black. In addition to biology, by specifying "in the United States" Carl was in some way also acknowledging a cultural component to race as well. Carl was the only respondent in

the study who actually said that "White" would be the most common term he would use to describe himself. He said:

> I've always considered myself White. I don't believe in—not saying anything about Tejano, Latino, or this or that—to me white is just white and that's it. I don't think there's anything to do with Mexicans or whatever…I don't think because you have an Anglo-Saxon name considers you White or because you have Gonzalez or Marquez makes you Mexican or Latino.

Carl comments about the use of surnames to classify persons. He says that just because you have a Spanish surname does not mean you are Mexican, and therefore, not White. He also notes that an "Anglo-Saxon name" does not necessarily make you White. While the quote clearly minimizes the role of Mexican racial or ethnic identity, reducing it to merely a last name, Carl's history complicates this reading.

Carl's last name is Adam. His father's last name was actually Adame, but due to a typo made by the U.S. army when his father was discharged in the 1930's, his last name on all his government paperwork was changed to Adam. Carl says that when his father complained, he was told that he would have to keep the name because it would be too costly to change. Carl's family dates back several generations in the United States. He had only one grandparent from Mexico, and the rest of his ancestors came from families who had lived in the area since it was a part of Mexico. The Adame family was one of these families, and Carl had been keeping track of a pending lawsuit in the Valley regarding the reclamation of his ancestors' land by their descendents. He proudly showed me newspaper clippings documenting the struggle.

Carl feels that his last name creates issues for him because he says, "Constantly, constantly they ask me, 'Why do you have the last name Adam?'" When asked how he

responds to this, he said that he usually says, " 'Hey it's none of your business.' I don't ask them, 'Why is your name Smith or Gonzalez? Why should you ask me?' Usually I tell them that it is none of their damn business." Later in the interview, when I asked about other labels used to describe persons of Mexican ancestry, Carl rejected all these terms with the exception of "Tejano" which he said simply meant someone from Texas, "could be a White Tejano, could be a Black Tejano, or could be an Indian Tejano."[26] Carl seemed frustrated with others' attempts to classify him, particularly their inquiries about his last name. In response, he appears to have opted out of labeling as anything other than a racially White person from Texas. Similar to Mari, he minimizes any differences between Mexican Americans and Anglos, saying that it should not matter what your last name is. Both Mari and Carl unite Mexicans and Anglos under the category of "White" because they are not "Black." Respondents who checked White "because I'm Caucasian" usually relied on a Black-White binary or cited "Black, White, and Asian" as the only "races."

Rebecca, a twenty-three year old college student from Mission responded, "White, I guess...because to me race is like Caucasian, Black, and Asian or something isn't that it? I don't know." Rebecca was the only respondent I interviewed who had a parent who is not of Mexican ancestry.[27] Rebecca described her father as "White, German and Dutch." She knew very little about her father, however, because her parents

[26] Interestingly, he introduces "Indian" as a third race here.
[27] A few respondents noted a non-Mexican, European (Irish, English, Italian, French, etc.) ancestor, either a grandparent, great-grandparent, or someone even further back in their family tree. Only one person acknowledged having any African ancestry. And no one reported any Asian ancestry. Most detailed their ancestry as simply Mexican, or spoke of themselves as a mixture of Spanish and Indian.

divorced when she was young. Rebecca was raised by her mother, a third generation Mexican American.

Rebecca said that she uses “Hispanic” most often to describe herself and that she would check “Hispanic” if it were a racial option on the census form. However she said that she feels that Hispanic is “more of an ethnicity,” whereas White, Black, and Asian are races. Like Carl, Rebecca also struggles as people often question her non-Spanish surname. She is very light-skinned with light brown hair, which was actually dyed blonde at the time of our interview because she was playing a character in a theater production. Rebecca did not make any attempts during the interview to dismiss or minimize the role of her Hispanic “ethnicity” in her life. She detailed stories of discrimination from both Anglos and Hispanics, and lamented her color which she feels separates her from other Hispanics who question her Hispanic identity. She commented, “I hope my kids are really, really, really dark so they don’t have to go through that.” Overall, respondents who cited biological reasons for their identification as “White” seemed to oscillate during the interview between speaking of their identity as a racialized one (detailing accounts of discrimination, for example), while at the same time maintaining Hispanic is not a race.

“White” Because That is the Only Option

This was the most common reason given for checking “White.” Many respondents felt that if Hispanic was not an option, then they should check “White.” Frank is a twenty-three year old construction worker living in McAllen. Frank was born in Mission. His father is a second generation Mexican American, and his mother’s family

dates back at least three generations in the U.S. When asked what he would put for his race, he said, "Well, I guess I would put White. I don't see Hispanic there or Mexican American. I was always taught to put White if there is no Hispanic." I asked Frank who had taught him to check "White" when there was no "Hispanic." He said that he was not sure exactly where he had learned that information. He further commented that "Mexican American" was the term he preferred to label himself, and that he would like to have had it as a racial option. Frank said, "I think we are big enough to be our own race, especially now that we are growing."

Most respondents who said that they put "White" because it was their only option said they would prefer a Hispanic or Mexican American option on the race question. Fifty-five year old Ana is a third generation Mexican American who works as a hairdresser in Del Rio. She answered, "White…When there was not Hispanic, we put White. That is what we would have to put." When asked if she would typically use the term "White" to describe herself, Ana said, "No, I would say Mexican American. I would never say White."

Maria, a seventy-seven year old housewife living in Austin, also said that she was told to put White when there was no Hispanic option. Maria was born in California, but her parents returned to Mexico when she was only five years old. She then immigrated to the U.S. when she was eighteen. Maria has both her U.S. and Mexican citizenships. When asked what she would put for her race, she said:

Maria: I think what I have done—asking people what I should put, and I put White. I'm not Black, American Indian, no. So that's how they had told me to do it.
So people have told you that you should check White?
Maria: Yes. And I put that.
OK.
Maria: But in my heart, I'm Mexican American.

When I asked Maria who had told her to check "White," she answered that she learned it from her friends and neighbors. "It is kind of funny," she said, referring to the fact that she had answered "White." She continued, "Because I say [I am] Mexican number one, because I am one hundred percent, and American also, next." Maria views herself as Mexican first, and American second. "Because I'm proud of the two nations, but I was raised in Mexico." Later in the interview, she confided in me:

> I'll tell you I have a big respect for the United States, but I will never put the flag of the United States on my car, or outside [my home]. Because I feel bad because if I would put up a Mexican flag, someone would tell me "oh, nope"... And if I can't put up the Mexican flag, none goes. But my heart goes to both.

Maria expressed pride in being both Mexican and American, but maintained her loyalty to Mexico first. Overall, like Maria, most respondents who said "White because that is the only option" labeled as Mexican American, and all said that they would never use "White" as a self-referent. Rather, they claimed that they had heard or been instructed to mark "White" in the absence of a "Hispanic" option on forms. They all expressed a desire to see a Hispanic or Mexican American as an option on the race question.

“Other” Because That is the Only Option

While most of the respondents who marked “White” said that they did so because that was the only option, most respondents who marked “Other” also cited this reason. Many simply scanned the form, and when they did not see a Hispanic option, said that they would have to write in a Hispanic identifier. For example, Alex is a forty-three year old third generation Mexican American living in San Antonio where he works in sales. He said, “Well normally I would put Hispanic.” He then proceeded to look over the racial options. “I guess it would be Other then,” he said. Alex said that he would write “Hispanic” under “Other” because that is the term he typically uses to describe himself.

Juan, who lives in Del Rio, answered similarly. Juan said that he would check “Other” and write in “Mexican American” for his race. When I asked him why, he said simply, “Because I’m Mexican American.” Juan is eighteen years old and recently graduated high school. He still lives at home with his parents. His father was born in Mexico, while his mother’s family dates back at least three generation in Texas. Both Juan and Alex were born in the United States, but this type of response was also common among immigrants that I interviewed.

Emilio immigrated to Del Rio from Acuña last year. He is thirty-six years old and works as an electrician. He moved to Del Rio to be with his wife, a Mexican American woman from Del Rio. He hopes to remain in the U.S. and become a U.S. citizen. Emilio said that he would write “Mexicano” because he is from Mexico.

Blanca, who has lived in the U.S. for eight years, resides in Fort Worth where she works as a housekeeper. Blanca is not a U.S. citizen and does not plan on staying in the

United States permanently. She moved to Texas from Chihuahua where she hopes to return someday. She said that she would write in "Hispanic" and that "Hispanic" was the term she uses most often to describe herself. She said that it describes "people who speak Spanish"[28] here in the U.S. Overall, for several respondents, both U.S.-born and immigrants, the choice of what to put for their race seemed obvious. They wrote in their preferred label. For U.S.-born Mexican Americans, the choice was usually "Hispanic" or "Mexican American," while for immigrants it was typically "Hispanic" or "Mexican."

"Other" Because We are Not Seen as White

Only two respondents mentioned phenotype and/or discrimination as reasons for marking "Other." Luis is a twenty-eight year old waiter in Del Rio. He was born in Del Rio, but was raised in Acuña, Mexico across the border until he was fourteen when he returned to Del Rio. Luis responded that he would write in "Hispanic." He further commented, "Where is Hispanic? Or Latino? …Most of us people with this skin (he pulls at the skin on his arm), they say we are Latino, not Puerto Rican or Mexican or Cuban. They say 'you are Latino.'" Interestingly, Luis actually had a light brown/olive skin tone, and yet he is the only respondent to directly give a skin color response for marking "Other." When asked what he typically uses to label himself, Luis answered "Mexican," not "Hispanic" as he had written on the form. When I asked about this, he said, "It doesn't matter to me," that basically Latino, Hispanic, Mexican, or Mexican American were all about the same for him.

[28] Author's translation of original Spanish.

Another respondent who mentioned phenotype and discrimination as his reason for marking "Other" was Meme, a seventy-eight year old farmer in Mission. He asked:

> Where is Mexican? I don't know what to write? We Mexicans were never White. Later they tried to call us White, but we were never White. I would write Mexican…I don't know who made the question that way – probably some gringo who graduated college pero (but) he does not know what it's like down here.

Meme was born near Mission. His mother was from Mexico, and his father was from Spain. Meme said that he typically uses "Mexican" to describe himself. He said:

> If they say, "What are you?" I'm Mexican. I'm not really Mexican Mexican because my daddy was a Spaniard. He came from Spain. But they say I look like mama and mama came from Mexico.

Meme also uses his physical resemblance to his mother who was from Mexico to explain his identification as Mexican. But like Luis, Meme also said he was not very particular about what he is called. "They can call me whatever they want to. I live my own life; they live their own life…. We've been called so many things, and to me it doesn't matter what they call me." Both Luis and Meme used references to external classification ("They say we are Latino." or "We were never treated as White.") to explain their choice to write in an "Other" race response. They both based the responses on their experiences with how others perceived and treated them, but interestingly both dismissed the importance of labels. And later in the interview, both also minimized any experiences with discrimination.

Luis claimed that he had seen discrimination "up north" where he had worked as a migrant worker in Minnesota, but that there was not much discrimination in Texas and

California, "because there is more of a Mexican community." When I asked Meme if he had experienced discrimination, he replied:

> I don't think so. I might not have been discriminated against because I knew where to go and where not to go. If I knew that I would make trouble in this and that, I don't need them. I go somewhere else. I mean that's my theory. Why look for something that you don't have?

Both Luis and Meme lived on the Mexican side of town in their communities, and had primarily Mexican social networks. In some ways this may have shielded them from overt acts of discrimination, because of their limited interaction with Anglos. But still, both seemed to have enough interactions with the dominant group to know what "they call us" and how "they treat us." And this influenced their racial identification, even though both sought to downplay the importance of how others label or treat them.

"Other" Because We Are a Mixture of Races

A few respondents marked "Other" race because they expressed pride in being a mixture of races as persons of Mexican/Hispanic heritage. Adriana, who works as a secretary in Austin and is twenty-three years old, said she would put, " Mestizo…because we are not all White, we are not all Black, we are not all Indian. We are a little bit of everything." Adriana, a second generation Mexican American, was the only respondent I interviewed who referenced any African ancestry. Most respondents only described themselves as a mixture of European and Indian. This may have been the result of Adriana's educational and political background. She had taken ethnic studies classes at the University of Texas at Austin, and was the only person that I interviewed who had

been active in MEChA, a political Chicano/a student organization. These experiences likely contributed to her understanding of Mexican people as a group whose history included the presence of persons of African ancestry, and her pride in this "mestizo" background. Adriana actually had a dark red-brown complexion, and is sometimes asked by others if she is Native American. She discussed her indigenous roots, yet did not feel marking "American Indian" was an option, "We are a little bit of everything."

One respondent remembered that she changed her response between 1990 and 2000 to express pride in her Hispanic identity that is composed of "different bloods." Luisa, a fifty-four year old teacher in Mission said:

> I put White in 1990. There was no Hispanic. In 2000, I checked Other and wrote in Hispanic. There was a big change from the year 1990 to the year 2000. I don't know, I just felt like I really needed to express the fact that I was Hispanic and not White. So that's the reason I did it. My views as to my ethnicity changed in those ten years. I'm more proud to be Hispanic now than I was back then. Because of the upbringing we had, segregation, racial discrimination. We were too embarrassed back then to say we were. But I think as I've gotten older I feel like the Lord put me in this race and I should be proud of what I am. I mean I don't have anything to be embarrassed about. I think, so well, I am Hispanic. I do have different bloods, but none of us are pure this or pure that. So that's what I am. I am Hispanic.

Luisa felt as though the word "Hispanic" best described her as a person who is of "different bloods." This quote also highlights a common occurrence in my interviews where respondents use both "race" and "ethnicity" interchangeably. Luisa says that her attitudes towards her "ethnicity" changed as she realized that "the Lord put me in this race." Luisa chose the term Hispanic and said that this was the term she uses most commonly to describe herself. She refused any other label. She said:

> Hispanic is someone who has a mixture of bloods, either Spanish, Italian, French, Mexican. And I have a little bit of all of those. My ancestors came from Spain and some of them were blonde, blue-eyed. And I have a lot of relatives that came from Mexico that looked very Indian, dark skin, the dark eyes. So I'm a little mixture of all.

Luisa's parents were both from Mexico, but she says that her ancestors in Mexico were from very diverse backgrounds including both European and Indian ancestry. For respondents who marked "Other" because they were a mixture of races, this identification served to express a pride in being racially mixed.

"In Mexico I Was…."

Most immigrants that I interviewed seemed confused by the race question on the census. "Dónde es Hispanic? Qué puedo contestar? (Where is Hispanic? What can I answer?)" they would ask me. And seven of the nine immigrants that I spoke with chose to write in an "Other" race response. Most wrote in Hispanic or Mexican, citing that they did not fit anywhere else, making "Other" the only option. But a few immigrants relied on narratives of their experience with classification in Mexico.

Alma was born and raised in Mexico City. She immigrated to the U.S. in 1965 to attend college in California. There, she met and married a Mexican American man, whom she followed to Del Rio where she still resides. Alma is now fifty years old, divorced with two grown children, and has her U.S. citizenship. She speaks English fluently, and works as bilingual teacher at an elementary school. Alma said that she would answer, "White, because in Mexico I was always White. And when I came across [to] the United States, I didn't become brown or anything else." Alma had light brown skin, black hair,

and dark eyes. She said that typically here in the U.S., people assume she is Mexican because of her appearance. However, she has also been asked if she is "Arab." But, Alma said that in Mexico she was considered White. Alma told me that when she was young, her mother had gotten very upset with her because she had danced with a man who was below the families' social stature. He was of "la gente del pueblo"[29] her mother had told her. Alma's mother would not allow her to socialize with him because she said he was lower class and more Indian.

Estevan is from a rural area in Michoacan. He immigrated to the U.S. in 1980 to look for work. Estevan only went to school through the third grade in Mexico, which he said was very common in the area where he lived. Estevan speaks very little English. He lives in Fort Worth where he has worked in various factory jobs assembling car parts, radios, and other equipment. He is not a U.S. citizen, but hopes to become one someday. When asked what he would answer for his race, Estevan said, "Like there [in my home in Mexico], the race we are…We would say, 'We are campesinos'….There are many Indians in my land. There, we call ourselves campesinos."[30] Estevan said that in the area where he lived in Mexico, they were mostly Indians and they began working in the fields from a young age. Estevan had a dark red-brown complexion, and facial features that are typically associated with Indian ancestry. His identification as "campesino" was an affirmation of his identity as an Indian and as a field worker.

[29] Literally, "people from town," but used to mean lower class or common people.
[30] Author's translation of original Spanish. "Campesino" literally means a person from "el campo" (the country). It is used to mean someone who works in the fields.

Alma and Estevan represent opposite ends of the class spectrum in Mexico, but both approached the census race question relying on a conception of themselves as they were viewed in Mexico. They answered the question referring to racial (and class) identification in Mexico.

"American" as a Race

The overwhelming majority of those who checked "Other" race wrote in Hispanic, Mexican American, or Mexican, but four of my respondents have opted to write in a response indicating their U.S. citizenship.[31] One man wrote in "American of Mexican descent," two persons wrote "American," and one woman identified as "U.S.-Born." Joe, who put "American of Mexican descent" was born and raised on the Mexican side of San Antonio where he lives today. The son of third generation Mexican American parents, he speaks both English and Spanish fluently. At sixty-nine, he is retired from the military and runs a small shop at the flea market for extra income. Joe's shop at the market was decorated with American flags, and pictures of him meeting local politicians, all Democrats. Also proudly displayed was a framed photo of him meeting Bill Clinton during his presidency.

When I asked him about various terms that are used to describe people of Mexican ancestry, inquiring as to his thoughts about each term, Joe said that he would not use any of them. He would only use "American of Mexican descent." During the interview, I always tried to mirror the terms that my respondents preferred when asking

[31] These four respondents and Estevan who wrote "campesino," are the only interviewees to write in an "Other" response that was not a Hispanic identifier.

about the racial or ethnic make-up of their neighborhood social networks, etc. If they preferred Hispanic vs. Mexican American, I would use that term. During the interview with Joe, I mistakenly asked about is current friends, "Are they still mostly Mexican American?" He corrected me, "No, they are Americans of Mexican descent." Joe's service in the military clearly influenced his identification. He wanted to be viewed by others as a patriot first and foremost, as an American who had served in the U.S. military.

Thirty-seven year old Diana also identified as "American." She was born and raised in McAllen. The daughter of a Mexican immigrant mother and a U.S.-born Mexican American father, Diana grew up in a colonia on the outskirts of town. She and her family would migrate north seasonally to work in the fields. She now works as a nurse in Mission. When asked what she would put on the census form for her race, she said, "I would check Other and write in American." However, when I asked Diana what the most common term she would use to describe herself was, she answered "Hispanic." She also used "Hispanic American," but rejected all other labels. Both Diana and Joe appeared to be making distinctions during the interview between themselves as U.S.-born "Americans of Mexican descent" or "Hispanic Americans" and Mexican immigrants. Neither made any explicitly negative statements about immigrants, but both wanted to be recognized as "American," and not "Mexican." For Joe, this was also an indication of his strong patriotism and desire to be recognized an American who served his country.

Greg works as a police officer in San Antonio. His family dates back several generations in the U.S. He answered, "I would write in American…I was not born in Mexico… And where does Hispanic come from? I mean is there some place called

Hispania?" Greg, who works at prison, says he sees a lot of Mexican Americans with tattoos expressing pride in their Mexican heritage. He associates identification as "Mexican American," "Hispanic" and anything other than "American" with "people looking for trouble."

Edna, a seventy-two year old retired secretary living in Mission, responded that she would write in simply "U.S.-Born." Edna was the daughter of Mexican American father from South Texas and a Mexican immigrant mother. Her father had worked on the railroads and as a truck driver, and her mother had worked in a canning factory. She grew up on the Mexican side of town where she still resides. Edna said of her racial identification on the census:

> I believe I wrote U.S.-Born or something like that. But I didn't go colored or anything…. I am not one of those persons that says I'm Mexican American or Mexican, no. And I guess I should, but I just feel more comfortable with Other.

Edna felt as though a label that expressed her status as a U.S. citizen through her birth was the most appropriate term for her. Edna and Greg were two respondents who completely rejected any label indicated their Mexican ancestry, on the census or otherwise. When asked about other labels they would use to describe themselves (Mexican, Mexicano, Mexican American, Hispanic, Latino, or Chicano), both Greg and Edna said that none of these terms described them. Edna did say that she would use "Tejana" because she was born in Texas, while Greg would not accept any label but "American."

Edna was very proud of her parents' ability to raise her "never asking for public assistance," which she said taught her, "that you have to work for your own self." Both

she and Greg expressed conservative attitudes during the interview regarding issues such as bilingual education and affirmative action. Greg commented:

> I am not a firm believer of affirmative action. To me affirmative action is like a slap in the face, you know. Because you are of a minority descent, we're are going to go ahead and let you come in at your grade point average because we need more people of Hispanic or Mexican descent. I'm like no, that should an earned position, it doesn't matter what color you are, White, Black, Brown, doesn't matter, Yellow. If you are qualified for the position, then you should get it. I don't agree with that. I don't ever instill that in my children. I don't say oh, because you are of Mexican descent, you have all these things opened up for you—no, I gotta do it out of my own will, my own—because I want it, not because somebody says, "You know what, we need you because you're a minority, so we're gonna go ahead and pull you in." I don't agree with that.

Greg and Edna both believe in a kind of "sink or swim" attitude, arguing that in America all people have the opportunity for upward mobility if they work hard enough, and that your racial or ethnic background is not important in determining your success. Identifying with their Mexican ancestry would give a significance to racial or ethnic identity in the U.S. that they were both unwilling to grant. It also would place them in the same category with Mexican Americans who had failed to pull themselves up from poverty, and with criminals, "people looking for trouble" as Greg had put it.

In this way, "American" identity helped to distance them from less successful Mexican Americans and to reaffirm their belief in America as a meritocracy where race is of little importance. There was a disconnect, however, between this belief in the relative unimportance of race, and the realities of racism in their lives. Edna, for example had attended separate "Mexican schools" growing up. In fact, all four "American"/"U.S.-Born"-identified respondents lived in segregated, predominantly Mexican American neighborhoods. This "American" identification did not mean that their identities as

persons of Mexican ancestry have been unimportant in their lives. Rather, their assertion of "American-ness" appeared to be an expression of a desire to demonstrate patriotism, distinguish themselves from Mexican immigrants, and/or distance themselves from less successful Mexican Americans. That is, by calling themselves "American" they are indicating a desire to be seen as simply American. Their stories, however, throughout the interview often revealed that this was not actually a reality for them, as their life histories were colored with a history of racial segregation and discrimination.

Overall respondents used a variety of different explanations, alone or in combination, to explain their racial choice. These reasons included statements referencing generational or citizenship status ("I'm American."), biology ("I'm Caucasian, *not* Black." or "I'm a mixture of races."), classification by others ("I'm not seen as White.), identification in Mexico ("In Mexico I was…"), and statements that "White" or "Other" was simply the only option. My next section will explore what factors were associated with respondents' racial identification.

Factors Influencing Racial Choice

Results from the fifty-two interviews I conducted in these various sites in Texas corroborate my quantitative census data analysis of the state of Texas. The sixteen respondents in my interview sample who checked "White" were often older, more educated, and U.S.-born. Also, more women than men checked "White" for their race. Ten of the sixteen "White" respondents were women. I found no relationship between

speaking Spanish and checking "White" vs. "Other." All of these findings correspond with my analysis of the 5% PUMS Census data.

Issues that I was interested in exploring that the census data does not capture, are factors such as generational status, proximity to the Mexican border, issues of discrimination, physical appearance, and participation in organizations and community events. These were all topics that I was able to explore through my in-depth interviews. Three themes that I will be discussing in this section include: 1) Generational Status and Proximity to the U.S. Mexico Border, 2) Physical Appearance and Discrimination, and 3) The Politics of Race.

Generational Status and Proximity to the U.S. Mexico Border

One of the most salient themes I found in my fieldwork was the role of proximity to the Mexican border as a factor influencing my respondents' racial identification. My analysis of the Census Summary File 1 data revealed that over 70% of Latinos in each of these border sites had identified as "White." Furthermore, by mapping the racial responses for Latinos in Texas by county, I was able to see a clear pattern where Latinos all along the border are more likely to identify as "White." This pattern was also evident in my interviews. Eleven of the sixteen "White" respondents lived in the border cities of Mission, McAllen, and Del Rio. Seven of my twelve interviewees in Del Rio identified as "White." Only one of these "White"-identified border residents was an immigrant. Alma, who relied on her classification as "White" in Mexico City where she was born and raised, was the only "White" respondent on the border who was not born in the U.S. Many of these respondents were third generation and beyond. Along the border I was

able to see a fairly clear generational pattern where respondents whose families dated back further in the U.S. were more likely to mark "White."

These border cities were also where I found respondents who gave "White 'cause I'm American" responses. The identification as "White" is likely in opposition to being considered non-White and therefore not American by Anglos. Several respondents told stories of encounters with people who assumed that they were Mexican immigrants, or that they could not speak English. For example, forty-three year old Teresa is the daughter of a Mexican immigrant mother and a second generation Mexican American father from Del Rio. Teresa lives in Del Rio where she was also born and raised. She has a dark brown complexion and speaks both Spanish and English fluently. Teresa marked "White" on the census because said it was "the only option." Later in the interview when asked about her experiences with discrimination, she told this story:

> It just happened a couple of months ago. I was at K-Mart, and some White gentleman, and I am sure he didn't mean anything by this, but he came up to me and he said, "Excuse me, habla uh…habla ingles…(mocking his Spanish pronunciation)" and I turned around and said "I have no idea what you just said, I am so sorry." And so he wanted to ask me what size of clothes I wore, because I was about his wife's size… and so I started talking clothing, and I told him about sizes… and he said thank you and he walked away and he came right back and he said… "You know, I would have never thought that you could speak English so well. You can't even detect a Mexican accent on you. If I would have been blind-folded, I would have thought you were White." I said, "Imagine that!"(laughing) So yeah matter how hard they try to say there isn't [discrimination], there still is.

This man who approached Teresa at the store just assumed that because she is brown-skinned, she would not be able to speak English. And because she spoke English without an accent, he was so surprised that he actually returned to compliment her English,

saying, “If I would have been blind-folded, I would have thought you were White.” In stating this, it is obvious that by looking her he can tell that she is*not* White.

Teresa further commented about these experiences, “Oh, I think that in general, people, when they see a Hispanic vs. a White person [they think] that the White person is automatically going to be smarter, better looking, [a] harder worker than the Hispanic person.”[32] Teresa believes that people often make assumptions about her because of her appearance. They not only may assume that she is an immigrant who cannot speak English, but also may think she is less intelligent or industrious because she is Hispanic. My interviews suggest that because of encounters and experiences like these, U.S.-Born Mexican Americans in these border sites may be more likely to answer “White” for their race in order to distinguish themselves as “Americans” and not immigrants. Experiences with discrimination, which I will be addressing further in the next section, are a large component of this process.

Physical Appearance and Discrimination

I was interested in examining the role of physical appearance and experiences with discrimination in respondents’ racial choices. It has been hypothesized that the racial identification of Latinos on the census reflects their color. That is, lighter-skinned Latinos check “White” and darker-skinned Latinos mark “Other” race. To explore this, I took notes at the beginning of each interview describing the physical appearance of my

[32]Note that in this quote and the previous one, Teresa uses “White” to mean an Anglo person. This was fairly standard in my interviews. Both respondents who checked “Other” and those who marked “White,” usually used “White” only to refer to Anglos throughout the interview.

respondents. I also asked detailed questions about how others label them. I asked, "If you were waking down the street here in town and someone were to see you, do you think that person would know that you are Hispanic/Mexican/Mexican American (using their preferred label)? Has anyone ever asked you to identify your racial or ethnic background? Do you feel you have ever been discriminated against or treated differently because of your racial or ethnic background?"

Many of my respondents said that they had experienced discrimination from Anglos, and a few noted some incidents with other Mexican Americans. I received accounts of discrimination from both those who marked "White" for their race, and those who marked "Other." These experiences ranged from accounts of racial segregation and tracking in schools to incidents of being denied service or receiving poor service at stores and restaurants. Martha, who put "White" for her race, is a seventy-two year old woman living in Del Rio where she was born and raised. She described her hometown as still segregated, but not as severely as it once was. She spoke of the time when she was growing up:

> Segregation was—it was so pronounced, so vivid. You see, my brother had a very fair complexion. He had blue eyes. He had blonde hair, and he was a very light colored person…And when he went to the public school, he went and the other students were Spanish, Mexican surnames so he went with all the Mexicans. And he came to register. They saw him, and just by his features, they said, "Oh you don't belong here in this row you belong in the other one." And they sent him to where the Anglos were registering. When he got to the desk and they asked him, "What's your name?," he said, "My name is Juan Carlos Torres." They said, "Oh, you don't belong here. You belong in the other one." So they had him going back and forth. So then he went home and told dad, "They keep bouncing me back and forth." …Their motive for segregation, or their reason they gave for segregation, was because the Mexican kids didn't know English and that would hinder the

> learning for the Anglos. But most of the kids did know English already by that time, or could pick it up real quick. But they wouldn't test them. They—just by name, "You belong over there," you know—not by color and no testing, no nothing. And that's the way it was until oh, I don't know… maybe until 1958.

Martha remembers when the schools in town were completely segregated. Her brother, who was very light-skinned, was shuffled back and forth as he was mistaken for being "Anglo" by the teachers. She also remembers restaurants and country clubs in town that would not allow Mexicans. One such restaurant was right next door to her home growing up. And yet, she said that her father protected them from such places. He avoided such locations and would take his family only to the places owned by Mexicans, "within our own people we had everything we needed."

Tales of rigid segregation during their youth were very common among my respondents, particularly those who were over fifty. But many said that they felt their parents had tried their best to shield them from racism, by avoiding certain locations and staying on the Mexican side of town. Ana is another respondent who lives in Del Rio and put "White" for her race. She said of her childhood:

> Yeah, one way there was discrimination was we had schools separated from each other. But I never felt discrimination much then because we were on our side of town so I never got to feel it. But when we would go out to work… when we were leaving my dad would say, "Ok we are leaving. If you need to go to the bathroom, you better go to the bathroom. If you need to drink some water, you better drink some water. Because the first town we come through…we are not stopping there because they do not like the Mexicans."

Ana remembered this warning from her father regarding their trip out of town for work. Like Martha, she remembered her father being very protective of her family. And

because of that, she felt she was shielded from much discrimination as a child.

Laura also grew up in Del Rio, but she lives in Austin now. At sixty-eight years old, she is retired from her job in educational administration. Laura wrote in "Mexican American" on the census race question because it is her preferred label. Laura reflected on her experiences with discrimination growing up:

> Maybe it was because we were loved and protected and I was the only, I was the first niece with so many uncles that—we would go swimming at bridge. And at that time I don't think I even knew that we were not accepted at swimming pools because we were Mexican American. And it didn't bother me because—I don't know why. Maybe because it was not that important, but later on, when you grow up, you wonder how come I couldn't go swimming there or why didn't I question that fact that we were not allowed there?

Laura spoke of the realization as an adult that racial segregation was so everyday, so common in her youth that it was often unspoken. As a child she does not remember even knowing that they swam at the bridge because they were not allowed to swim at the pool. Today, Laura says that too many people want to ignore the continuing prevalence of racism that she says has affects her in her day-to-day life. She told this story about an incident at a shopping mall in Austin:

> I never go to those Saturday sales you know that Foley's has in the morning just till noon. Well I went one day to Foley's to that Saturday sale and I got there after [noon] and they hadn't changed the sign yet. So I went to the cash register. It was the men's department, and they said that, "No these things are not on sale," and I said, "But your sign is still up there." And they said, "Well, no you can't have them." And there was another lady looking at the same items that I was looking [at] and I noticed that they didn't tell her those things—that she couldn't pay for them. I was so angry that I actually cried. I was very, very angry. How dare they, you know, discriminate against me just—I mean that was flat out discrimination! And I made such as ruckus that they had to give it to me, but it hurts when you

> really experience it, and there have been other instances as well where you just feel like you're being treated treating different because you are Mexican American. Definitely it is there.

Laura details an account of discrimination she experienced at an Austin store. Other responds told similar stories of poor service at stores or at restaurants.

Alex, a thirty-six year old third generation Mexican American, lives in San Antonio. He wrote in "Hispanic" for race because it is his preferred label. Alex said that he has experienced discrimination in restaurants. He said:

> Couple of times in restaurants. One time in particular, we're standing behind people and they're ordering the food. We were looking at the menu. We walked up next and they went to the side to wait, and we start ordering. And then the person that's back there says, "We're out of everything." And I say, "Excuse me?" And I started asking and they said, "No, we're out of that, and we're out of that. No, we're out of everything." and they had just ordered and then I started looking around and noticed that we were the only Hispanics there at the time. So I told my wife, "Let's go. That's fine. Let's go somewhere else." Another time, when we got somewhere and we sat down and we were just totally ignored, and other people were served ahead of us, and stuff like that.

These kind of stories were frequent among both respondents who checked "White" and those who marked "Other" for their race. In fact, some of the most painful stories of discrimination came from "White" respondents.

Fifty-eight year old Mari, who answered "White" for her race "because I'm Caucasian," lives in Fort Worth, but she was raised in the border town of Laredo. When Mari left Laredo to attend a state university in Central Texas, she says she encountered discrimination for the first time. She says that she saw signs there in the local restaurants that said "We refuse to serve Mexicans." She also told this story about her experience at the university:

> There was this incident. I didn't even know about it when it happened. When I got to college my roommate was a girl from a German background, from Fredericksberg and you can't be more—I mean you know what I'm talking about. And that's where you really see those signs— "We refuse to serve Mexicans." And when she saw me—that I was her roommate and she nearly died! I mean we didn't know each other. And she went down and told the hall mother, and had her room changed. And then we became best friends the next semester. And then she is the one who told me what happened. She ended up feeling so guilty and so bad. She told me, "I didn't want to share a room with a Mexican. I didn't know what you were going to be like." I mean it didn't bother that much. I have a lot of self-confidence. Maybe for someone who did not have as much confidence, it would bother them.

Mari's college roommate refused to share a room with a "Mexican," so she actually did not have a roommate her first semester of college. Mari said that it was when she left Laredo when she really saw discrimination, because in her home in Laredo her interactions were primarily with other persons of Mexican ancestry. Currently, Mari also feels that she experiences discrimination in Fort Worth at the school where she teaches. She remarked, "As a teacher I always felt that I was scrutinized a lot closer than other teachers, and so I always had to dress better. I felt like I had to dress well so they wouldn't say, 'Oh look, she's different.' " But Mari says that because she is a strong and confident person, she is able to deflect these incidents.

This was a common theme in my interviews, as respondents often minimized their experiences with racism, saying that it does not matter to them. Or commented, "I just stay here on my side of town. Why go looking for trouble?" I will be exploring this issue in more detail in the final chapter. But overall with regard to the issue of the role of discrimination, I found no pattern such that respondents who had experienced discrimination answered differently on the race question than those who did not report

incidents of discrimination. Furthermore, I found no pattern with regard to skin color and physical appearance. Lighter-skinned respondents often checked "Other," and many dark-skinned respondents also marked "White." But, this is not to say that phenotype and experiences with racism are not important in their racial identification. Rather, persons simply had different responses to encounters with racism. Some chose to identify as "Other" and write in a Hispanic identifier at least in part because this is how they are seen and treated by others. Other respondents chose to identify as "White" as a possible way to assert that they are "American" in the face of being identified by Anglos as non-White. Overall, my interviews in Texas suggest that Mexican American "whiteness" on the census is not a direct reflection of color or discrimination such that those who check "White" are lighter-skinned or experience less incidents of discrimination.

The Politics of Race

One of the other issues that I was able to explore through my in-depth interviews was the role of political attitudes and participation in organizations in my respondents' racial identification. I was interested in whether respondents who marked "Other" for their race might be more politically involved or active in the Mexican American community compared to those who marked "White." I asked respondents questions about their participation in political organizations, beginning with questions about their family when they were growing up. I asked if anyone in their extended or immediate family had belonged to any organizations when they were young. I also asked for their past and current involvements in any organizations, including political groups and social clubs.

And for those not involved in any organizations that were race-based, I asked if they would consider joining an organization that was based on being Hispanic/Mexican American/Mexican.

The overwhelming majority of my respondents were not active in political or race-based organizations. The most common organizational membership or volunteer activity reported was usually a social group related to their church. Most said that they either "don't get into politics" or simply had no time for such interests because of the commitments of work and family. When I asked Miguel (who had answered "White… 'cause I'm American" for his race) about his family's participation in organizations or clubs when he was growing up, he replied:

> We were lucky if we had food on our table (laughs). No, we were just normal people working and still [are]. When Cesar Chavez—he came here to the Valley, back then we had las huelgas (the strikes)—that's what we called them then. But it was like if you don't work you don't eat. Simple as that. We had to work. That was our life. Life was hard. Back then you had to work. We had a big family, fifteen… But no, we had Cesar Chavez and La Raza Unida and all that, but we didn't pay attention to that.

Miguel had worked along side his parents as a migrant worker when he was growing up. But because of his family's financial struggles, he said they had little time for participating in political organizing. Miguel's family had lived in a colonia on the outskirts of Mission when he young. At forty-five years old, he now lives in town with his wife and works as a janitor at the school. About his own participation in any organizations he said, " No, not really…I think I go more or less with the same routine. I work. Never say 'no' to the boss…Live a simple life." Miguel's response represents the majority of answers that I received for my inquires about political involvement—that

work came first and often left little time for politics. This was the most common reply I got both from those who checked “White” and those who selected “Other” for their race. But, while I did find politically active persons among both groups, interestingly, some of my most politically active respondents identified as “White.”

I met Teresa, whom I introduced in a previous section, at a town meeting at a school in Del Rio. The meeting was concerning a struggle regarding the treatment of some workers at a local institution. They were fighting for better working conditions, salaries, and benefits. And Teresa, who was introduced to me by a contact in the community, was a major organizer for the event. She was one of the founding members of a social justice organization in town that I soon learned had sponsored a number of related events.

Teresa was the daughter of a second generation Mexican American father from Del Rio, and a Mexican immigrant mother from across the border in Acuña. Her parents had worked as migrant workers for many years, and Teresa was raised on the Mexican side of town, in the barrio of San Felipe. Now forty-three years old, a college graduate and mother of three, Teresa was a self-employed, working for a business that was owned by her family. This allowed her a great deal of flexibility in her schedule to be involved such community organizing.

Teresa said that she would not describe herself as “too political,” but noted that her interests had changed over the years. When asked about what kinds of organizations she had participated in, she replied:

> Before they were more like Women's Junior League, the border patrol men's wives' club [her husband is a Mexican American border patrol agent]…that do charity work. And there is a difference between charity work and the work I do now which is justice. There is difference between charity and justice. I am more involved in justice now.

Teresa made a distinction between volunteer work that is done without a political motivation and work that is done with the goal of changing society. The work she was engaged in currently was aimed at alleviating social injustices.

Teresa marked "White" for her race "because I don't see Hispanic." She felt that that if Hispanic or Mexican American was not an option, then White is what she would have to put. During the interview when I asked about various labels for persons of Mexican ancestry, Teresa said that "Mexican American" was the only term that she really uses to label herself. Teresa also used the phrase "American of Mexican descent" when explaining to me that she was not "Mexican." This was a phrase that surfaced continually in my interviews, as respondents sought to distinguish themselves from Mexican immigrants. Overall, my qualitative analysis of factors contributing to racial choice did not show a clear link between political or community involvement and identification as "White" vs, "Other." Rather, other factors seemed more relevant, including proximity to the border and generational status.

Conclusion

My results suggest that location near the U.S.-Mexico border is an extremely important factor in respondents' racial identification on the census. This was evident in my analysis of Census 2000 Summary File 1 data exploring the racial identification of

Latinos for Texas as a whole and in these specific interview sites. Respondents in the border communities of Del Rio, Mission, and McAllen were much more likely to mark "White" for there race, particularly in comparison to those in North Texas and Central Texas. My interviews also supported this pattern as I found many more "White" respondents in these border towns. Results from my interviews revealed that it is U.S.-born respondents who lived along the border were more likely to check "White," particularly those whose families dated back several generations in the U.S. While U.S.-born respondents were more likely to check "White" than immigrants in each of my interview sites, I did not find a clear pattern of increasing likelihood of checking "White" by generation in non-border sites. This appears to be a context-specific phenomenon. U.S.-born Mexican Americans who live in border communities associate whiteness with American identity. This identification as White is also a response to discrimination, as respondents assert these identities in the face of external classification by Anglos who mistake them for immigrants.

My interview results support my quantitative findings that "White" respondents are also more likely to be older and more educated. Older respondents often recalled painful memories of rigid segregation they experienced growing up. Also, college-educated respondents often had more tales of discrimination that they encountered as they left their predominantly Mexican communities to attend school, and thus, had more interaction with Anglos. Overall, "White" respondents did not experience less discrimination, and were not lighter-skinned than those who checked "Other." "White" respondents were also not less involved or active in their communities, or less likely to

speak Spanish. Most "White" respondents spoke fluent Spanish, as many lived on the border where language maintenance over several generations in the U.S. is prevalent.

Almost all of my respondents said that they would rather have an option for "Hispanic" or "Mexican American" for their race on the census. And only one respondent who marked "White" said that he would typically use the word "White" to label himself. The majority of my respondents, both those who checked "White" and those marked "Other," would typically use Hispanic and/or Mexican American to describe themselves. My next chapter explores the uses and meaning of various labels used to describe persons of Mexican ancestry in the U.S., as I explore the meaning of these terms in the context of Texas.

Chapter 5: What We Call Ourselves Here: Mexican American Racial and Ethnic Labeling in Texas

Introduction

In addition to asking respondents to tell me what they would answer for their race on the census, I was also interested in whether their answers corresponded with what labels they typically use to identify themselves. I asked if the term they checked or wrote in on the census was the term they would use most frequently to identify themselves. Of those who marked "White," only one person said that he would use the term "White" to describe himself most frequently. For the overwhelming majority of respondents who marked "White" on the form, they would not typically use the word to describe themselves, and only used the word "White" to refer to Anglos for the rest of the interview. Most "White" interviewees said that "Hispanic" or "Mexican American" were the most common terms that they would use to label themselves. In this chapter, I will be detailing the specific "Other" race write-in responses, and the meaning of various labels used to describe persons of Mexican ancestry in the United States.

I asked respondents to tell me their thoughts about each of the following labels: Mexican, Mexicano or Mexicana, Mexican American, Hispanic, Latino or Latina, Chicano or Chicana, and Tejano or Tejana. For each term, I asked who the word describes and whether the interviewee would use this label to refer to him/herself. This chapter details the responses I received for each of these terms as I explored which terms respondents identified with, and how these identifications varied by nativity, age, and other characteristics.

Mexican

Only four respondents chose to write in "Mexican" as an "Other" race response. Two of these respondents were immigrants and one was born in the U.S., but raised primarily in Mexico. Only one respondent who was born and raised in the U.S. chose to write in "Mexican" for his race on the census. There were two main definitions that I received from my interviewees when I asked the questions, "Who is Mexican? Are you Mexican?"

Someone From Mexico, Born in Mexico, or Who Lives in Mexico

In answer to the question "Are you Mexican?" most of my respondents who were born here in the U.S. answered an emphatic, "No." Irene, a business owner in Del Rio whose family dates back six generations in the area said:

> People say "Are you Mexican?" I say, No, because I wasn't born in Mexico. I was born in the United States. My mom and dad were born in the United States. My grandma and grandpa were born in the United States. My culture I would venture to say is…Mexican… and that's my culture… the culture that I claim. But I am not a Mexican. If I was to go to Mexico and tell them that I am a Mexican, they don't let me buy property over there because I am not Mexican. They don't let me vote because I am not Mexican. Therefore, in my opinion, only ignorant people…I define ignorance as a lack of knowledge… it's not bad… it is just lack of the correct knowledge… and people that know the history of Mexico know that if you cannot vote in the that country, then you are not a citizen of that country. Then why do you call yourself Mexican?

Like Irene, most of my U.S.-born respondents said that a "Mexican" was someone born in Mexico. And because they were born in the United States and live in the United States, they were not "Mexican." Immigrants also agreed that this was "someone from Mexico,"

but were often more flexible in their definition, including persons born here of Mexican ancestry.

Someone of Mexican Ancestry, Born Either in Mexico or in the U.S.

Only a few U.S.-born respondents would label themselves as "Mexican," defining the term as someone of Mexican ancestry (born on either side of the border). Olga, a fifty-six year old woman in San Antonio said that she is Mexican, "because my grandparents are from Mexico." Meme, a seventy-eight year old farmer in Mission, also said that he was Mexican because his mother was from Mexico. Olga answered "Hispanic" on the census, while Meme answered "Mexican."

Other U.S.-born respondents who identified with the term "Mexican" included those who had been raised in Mexico, or grew up on both sides of the border. These four interviewees: Luis, Lupe, Maria, and Carlos, all said that "Mexican" was a term with which they would identify. Lupe and Maria had answered "White" for their race, while Luis had chosen to write in "Hispanic." Of these four, only Carlos, a twenty-six year old who lives in Austin, chose "Mexican" as his write-in response. Carlos recently graduated college and works in the computer field. He grew up on the Brownville-Matamoros border, born in Brownsville and raised in Matamoros, Mexico. Carlos said that he would answer "Mexican" for his race, and uses this word most frequently to describe himself because he says it best reflects his cultural identity. He said:

> To me a Mexican person is someone who ascribes more to the cultural and moral standards of Mexico, as antiquated as they may be. But you identify as Mexican. Because for me to be an American is alien. I don't know what an American is. I know what a Mexican is because that is where I grew up.

Overall, “Mexican” was a term used by immigrants or U.S.-born persons who were raised in Mexico. But, the label was rejected by the majority of U.S-born respondents, who wanted to be recognized as Americans and not immigrants.

Mexicano/a

Only one of my respondents wrote “Mexicano” for his race on the census. That person was Emilio, who immigrated to Del Rio from Acuña just last year. He was the interviewee in the sample who had immigrated most recently. There were two main definitions or uses that I received from my respondents regarding the term “Mexicano/a.”

Same as Mexican, Someone From Mexico

Most of my respondents said that Mexicano or Mexicana was the same as “Mexican.” That is, Mexicano/a means someone born in Mexico or who lives in Mexico. Marco, a third generation Mexican American that I interviewed in Mission, said, “For me Mexican or Mexicano would be somebody from Mexico that is not a resident of the United States.” Marco believed both Mexican and Mexicano describe someone living in Mexico. And because he was born in the United States and lives here, he would not label himself as Mexicano. The majority of my U.S.-born respondents would not use the term Mexicano/a to describe themselves. Overall, only immigrants I interviewed would use this label as a self-referent.

Used to Identify Mexican Americans When Speaking Spanish

Some U.S.-born respondents did note that they would use the term Mexicano or Mexicana to describe themselves and other U.S.-born Mexican Americans if they were speaking in Spanish. When I asked Laura, a retired school administrator in Austin, if she was Mexicana, she answered:

> No, because I was not born in Mexico. But, when we're talking about ourselves, "Soy Mexicana." We do use that term more than "Soy Mexican American." You only say you're a "Mexicana."

Laura says that if she were speaking in Spanish, she would say "Soy Mexicana" ("I am Mexicana"), rather than using her usual preferred label, Mexican American. Those who noted this use of "Mexicano/a" when speaking Spanish said that it was easier, less awkward to use the term than to use the English words "Hispanic" or "Mexican American."

Mexican American

Nine "Other" race respondents chose "Mexican American" as their write-in response on the census. All those who chose to write in this term were born and raised in the United States. Two were second generation, six were third generation, and one was fourth generation Mexican American. There were four main definitions that I received from my respondents for the term Mexican American.

A U.S.-Born Person of Mexican Ancestry

Most persons that interviewed defined a Mexican American person as someone who was born in the U.S. and had ancestors from Mexico. Mari, whom I introduced in a

previous section, is a teacher in Fort Worth. Although she put "White" for her race, she typically uses the term Mexican American to describe herself. She says that this reflects her ancestry, while also expressing pride in her country, the United States. Mari said:

> Well, I was not born in Mexico. And I am very much an American. I love my country. I would not settle in Mexico. I love to visit it, but I am very proud of my country, so therefore I am Mexican American. You really have to label people what they are. And that's how I understand how Chinese Americans might feel, that live here and have always lived here and love their country. And I know exactly how they feel. I love my country. And I don't like it when in our group [of friends]…I can't stand for them to start criticizing the United States. And we have some Germans in that group, and they are the ones that are very critical of the United States. And one time they had this heated discussion about the American government and I got up and said, we'll the Mexican government was worse. And they realized that they were putting down a country that I love very much and they have to remember that this is my country. And those are things that can set me on fire because I am very loyal to my country. That is why when you ask if I'm Mexican, I say no I'm not Mexican from Mexico. Because I've always been here. I was born here.

Mari says that she is Mexican American, and not Mexican because she was born here and she is proud to be a citizen of the United States. Another expression of this pride in America was some respondents' desire to reverse the term "Mexican American" to "American of Mexican descent."[33] Overall most U.S.-born Mexican Americans identified with this term. Immigrants who had children in the U.S. identified their children as Mexican American, and some also considered themselves to be Mexican American.

[33] All of my interviews were conducted between 2002 and 2004. Some of this American-first rhetoric may be post-9/11 effect, reflecting the resurgence of patriotism that has gripped the country following this event.

Someone From Mexico Who Became a U.S. Citizen

Some immigrants that I interviewed identified the term Mexican American as not only someone born in the U.S., but someone like themselves who settled here from Mexico. This was the case particularly for those who had obtained their U.S. citizenship. Ernesto, an immigrant that I interviewed in Del Rio, wrote "Mexican" for his race on the census. But, he says that he would also label as Mexican American. "It has your citizenship," he said, pointing to the word "American." "I lost my citizenship in Mexico when I became an American," he continued. Ernesto said that because he is now a citizen of the United States, he is Mexican American.

Estevan, who chose to identify as "campesino" for his race, also noted that he would consider himself Mexican American. When I asked him, "Who is Mexican American?" he pointed to himself. Estevan then said:

> I am Mexican. I do not know if one day I will be an American citizen, if I continue in the little school [taking English classes]. But I would like to be an American citizen. I feel well on both sides. I feel equally well there and here.[34]

Estevan related being Mexican American with having U.S. citizenship, which he would like to obtain. Because he desires to stay here in the U.S. and become a citizen, he would consider himself Mexican American. A few U.S.-born Mexican Americans also identified the term Mexican American as including immigrants who were now U.S. citizens or had been in the U.S. for many years.

[34] Author's translation of original Spanish.

Someone of Mexican Ancestry That Speaks English

Ability to speak English was also something that was linked to the term Mexican American for a few respondents. Frank, who wrote "Mexican American" for his race on the census because it is the term he uses most frequently to describe himself, is a construction worker in McAllen. He said, "I've always used Mexican American only because I work with a lot of Mexicans. Spanish is their primary language…so I've always said [I am] Mexican American." Frank is third generation Mexican American and does speak Spanish. But, he says that the Spanish that he speaks is not the "true Spanish" that one would find in Mexico because he speaks more of a Tex-Mex, border dialect. Frank is more fluent in English and believes that this makes him more "Mexican American" than "Mexican."

Salvador also linked English ability to the term Mexican American. Salvador was born in Reynosa, Mexico. His family moved to Mission when he was eight years old. Salvador has never applied for U.S. citizenship, but plans to someday. Salvador wrote "Hispanic" for his race and says he uses this term most frequently to describe himself. When I asked if he would label as Mexican American, he said, " If I am applying for something, I would put Mexican American because I know the English and I know the Spanish. I'm considered a bilingual person." Salvador notes that he uses the term Mexican American when he wants to indicate on a job application that he speaks both English and Spanish.

Someone in the U.S. that Speaks Spanish and/or has Spanish Ancestry

Another definition for Mexican American that I also received was "someone in the U.S. who speaks Spanish" or "the same as Hispanic." In other words, because Mexican ancestry persons are the majority of Hispanic people in Texas, some simply use the label as a generic term for a Spanish-speaking person, or a person with Spanish ancestry who lives in the U.S. For example, Cristina, a twenty-seven year old teacher in Del Rio, is married to a man who was born in Spain. She chose "Mexican American" for her write-in response, and said she would also label as "Hispanic." When I asked about what she would put for her husband she said, " He was born in Spain, but he's lived here a good part of his life, so I think he would also put Mexican American or if not Hispanic." Cristina believes that her husband could be considered Mexican American as well because of his Spanish ancestry and his Spanish-speaking ability.

Hispanic

The term Hispanic was the most common "Other" race write-in response among my respondents. Fifteen respondents, or 42% of my 36 "Other" race interviewees, put "Hispanic" for their race. Persons of all generational statuses answered "Hispanic." And most "White" and "Other" race respondents said they would label themselves as "Hispanic." I found three definitions for the term that were used by my interviewees.

A Mexican American Person, A Person of Mexican Ancestry Born in the U.S.

Many interviewees viewed Hispanic as another word for Mexican American. As I noted in my discussion of the term Mexican American, because the majority of Hispanic persons in Texas are Mexican-origin, many of my respondents did not come into contact with a many Hispanics who were not of Mexican ancestry. Because of this, some used both terms interchangeably. As one man said, "Hispanic…I'm taking that to mean Mexican, you know, Hispanic [people] that speak Spanish."

Someone Who Speaks Spanish, A Broad Term

The most common definition of Hispanic that I received from both immigrants and U.S.-born respondents was that it is a general term for "someone who speaks Spanish." Some added "who lives here in the United States." Isabel, who was raised in the Rio Grande Valley and now lives in San Antonio, remembered writing in "Mexican American" for her race in 2000. But she says, "Now in 2003, I would use Hispanic… [because] there's a whole different—a pot of several different cultures that speak Spanish that could be Mexican, that could be Bolivian, that could be Puerto Rican, Cuban—Hispanic." Isabel sees the Spanish-speaking population as becoming increasingly more diverse in the U.S. now, and because of this she says there has been a shift in terminology from "Mexican American" to "Hispanic." And for this reason, she has changed her identification to this term.

While Isabel felt that she could include herself in this broad term, a few respondents did not like the term Hispanic because it lumped them with other Spanish-

speaking groups. Laura, who lives in Austin and wrote "Mexican American" for her race, said:

> We've always put Mexican American. I don't like any other title. I don't know why, but I don't care for any other title. Because we are Mexicans and we are Americans—Americans of Mexican descent. A lot of people say Hispanic. But Hispanic to me, that's the people from Spain or from other countries but not for us. Our grandparents came from Mexico, so we are Mexican Americans. I am not comfortable at all with Hispanic because that's too many of us put together and we're different.

Laura felt as though the term Hispanic referred to someone from Spain or other Spanish-speaking populations. She felt uncomfortable being placed in the same category with people she says may be very different from her.

Term Given by U.S. Government

While a handful of respondents did not like "Hispanic" because it was too broad, only one respondent rejected the term because she said it came from the U.S. government. Adriana is a twenty-three year old former member of MEChA, a Chicano/a political student organization. She lives in Austin where she works as a secretary. Adriana said, "No, I wouldn't like Hispanic, maybe Latino. Yeah, Hispanic is just, you know, what the government calls us. They came up with that one, and that just emphasizes the White Spanish." Having taken some ethnic studies courses at the University of Texas at Austin, Adriana referred to the government creation of the Hispanic category, and that this term emphasizes the White or Spanish part of her ancestry. Latino, on the other hand, she argued is a word that came from the people themselves and not from the government.

Latino/a

No one in the study chose "Latino" as write-in response for their race, and the overwhelming majority did not identify with the term. Many of my respondents expressed uncertainty as to what the word means, asking why we would be called "Latin." One woman said, "I think since we're Catholic, Latin. I guess that's what I think of because they used to use Latin in church." Overall, there were five main definitions that I received for "Latino/a."

Someone Who Speaks Spanish or Has Spanish Ancestry

Some acknowledged that they had heard the word, and knew it meant a group of Hispanic or Spanish-speaking people, but did not know who that group would be. Cristina, a woman I interviewed in Del Rio, said:

> Latino or Latina I think I would...probably be somebody from—from Latin Mexico (laughs). I don't know who that would be. Would it be Cubans? No, because [in] Cuba, they would be Cubans. And I have a cousin who married a guy from Colombia. He's Colombiano. He doesn't consider himself Latino. That's a good question. I don't know who that describes.

Like Cristina, most U.S.-born respondents expressed uncertainty about what Spanish-speaking group the term Latino/a describes. Immigrants, however, typically defined the term as similar to Hispanic, Spanish-speaking people more generally.

Someone From South American, Central American, or the Caribbean

Most people said that the term meant someone from South America. “Like the people from Brazil or Argentina,” one woman said. Some included Central America, “everyone South of Mexico.” This was the most common definition that I received from U.S.-born respondents—that a Latino was a Spanish-speaking person who was not of Mexican ancestry. They would use the term to describe Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and people from South America or Central America, but they would not use the term to describe themselves or other persons of Mexican ancestry.

Famous People on TV, and Music or Film Stars

Another common definition that I received from respondents, both those who were born in the U.S. and some immigrants, was the association of the word Latino with people who were famous. That is, television and film stars and especially singers. “When you say Latino I think of the music, of singers” many told me. One man said, “Latino or Latina is like—I don’t know, like Selena. She used to sing in Spanish and they consider her Latina.” Spanish music, and singing stars were associated with the word Latino for my respondents. My interviewees associated the label with “what they call us on television.” That is, they viewed the term as something put on them or other “Hispanics” by the media. Interviewees commented in particular that while they had heard or seen the word on television, they did not use it to describe themselves. Ana, a woman I interviewed in Del Rio said, “Latino or Latina. It comes to mind somebody I see on TV like Jennifer Lopez, or some guy that is maybe Puerto Rican or something else.”

More European-Ancestry Persons

One other definition that I received was the association of the word Latino/a with persons that were more European-ancestry. Seventy-one year old Mike put "White" for his race because "because it is the only option," but he typically labels as Hispanic. He said of the word Latino:

> Latin. I don't know where they get the Latino because there's no Latin in us. I don't know what that means. Do you watch those Mexican novelas (soap operas)?…Most of the people in them. They are all White people. You tell me why? Where are the Mexican people from Mexico? Where are the Indians? Where are the half-breeds? It tells me one thing. That Mexico is a country more or less like the United States. Because the Europeans that invaded Mexico, they remained in Mexico. They are the rich people with the French names. And the other groups, the Spanish people that came…so those are the people that I guess you could really call Latinos in the sense that they have very little Indian blood.

Mike associated the word Latino with more European-ancestry people in Mexico. Notice, that his reference is also to people on television, in Spanish-language soap operas. The overall theme in my respondents' comments about the word Latino, is that it described someone who was Spanish-speaking but not Mexican, who was a famous person on television or in music, and/or someone of more European ancestry.

Hispanic People in California, or Other Parts of the U.S.

Only a few respondents who had traveled in the U.S. (some as migrant workers), were aware that this was a term that was commonly used in other parts of the country, particularly in California. Robert, a police officer in McAllen, said, "I think of Californians. Hispanic people in California label themselves as Latinos. "These respondents associated the word as something used elsewhere, and although they said

they would not be offended if called “Latino,” it was not a word they would call themselves.

Tejano/a

No one in the study wrote in “Tejano” as an “Other” race response. Most U.S.-born and immigrant respondents identified the term as someone from Texas, but although my respondents were primarily born in Texas, most said they would not typically use the term to describe themselves. There were three main definitions or uses that I received regarding the word Tejano/a.

Music

Like Latino, many respondents said that the word Tejano was a term that they usually heard in reference to music, to Tejano music. As Ana, a woman in Del Rio, said, “And Tejano or Tejanita. It makes me think of the music. When I think Tejano or Tejana, I think of the music.” This was the most common definition that I received from U.S.-born Mexican Americans. Most said that they would use the term to discuss music, but would not use it to label themselves.

Used to Say “I’m From Texas” in Spanish

Similar to the word Mexicano/a, some respondents said that while they would not usually use the word to describe themselves, they would if they were speaking Spanish. Irene, a respondent in Del Rio, said:

> Tejano, because I am from Texas and really the name of the state was Tejas, so yes I am a Tejana. “Si estoy hablando Español, soy Tejana.” I wouldn’t say,“Yo soy de Texas.” That would be idiotic. Yo soy Tejana, Yo soy de Tejas, if I were speaking Spanish.

Respondents said that if they were speaking Spanish and someone asked them where they were from, they would answer, “Soy Tejano” (I’m Texan).

Someone Lower Class, Who Speaks Tex-Mex

Another definition that I encountered for the term Tejano was that it described someone who is lower class, possibly someone from the border. This was also linked to language and the use of Tex-Mex, or Spanglish. Martha, another interviewee from Del Rio commented:

> I am a Texan, but I don’t like to consider myself just a Texan. I like to consider myself… I don’t know. To me a Tejano or a Tejana is the people more that live down in the Valley, they have a low profile, a lower esteem or a lower education, that speak the Tex-Mex language. Because I don’t feel, me myself, I have been told by many people that I don’t speak the Tex-Mex language…I speak a higher level of Spanish and English. My daddy was very strict on that… He tried to teach us good Spanish and at home we’d always speak Spanish, we wouldn’t speak English… He said, “English you can learn it in school… Spanish you’ll learn it at home” so we used—he was very strict about teaching us a very correct Spanish.

Some respondents like Martha linked the word Tejano to persons who were from the Rio Grande Valley, which they further associated with persons who were lower class, had less education, and did not speak “proper” Spanish.

Chicano/a

Only one of my respondents chose "Chicana" as her write-in response. Ann Marie, a forty-year old third generation Mexican American woman in Fort Worth, put "Chicana" for her race. She was also one of only a few respondents who answered something different in 1990 than she did in 2000. She says that in 1990, she believes she wrote "Hispanic." She would put Chicana now, " Just to narrow it down…It's just that I'm the second generation born here and I've assimilated rather well. So it's just a nationality kind of thing for me. I'm not from Mexico, but I'm of Mexican descent. And instead of saying all that I just say I'm Chicana." Ann Marie says that to her the word "Chicano/a" means, "That you've arrived. You're middle class." She said that she often uses "Hispanic" to label herself because more people know what the word means outside of the Mexican-ancestry community. But, she prefers "Chicana." Ann Marie was one of only a few respondents who would identify with the term Chicana, and the only person who associated the term with higher class, or upward social mobility. The majority of my respondents did not have this impression of the word. Overall, the label Chicano/a was the term that brought out the most variety of definitions from my interviewees. I have divided the responses that I received into seven main types of responses to the word Chicana/o.

An Uncertain Word

Several U.S.-born respondents, particularly young people, did not know what the word Chicano meant. Frank, a twenty-three year old man I interviewed in McAllen commented, "Chicano or Chicana, I'm not too familiar with. I've heard of it, but I don't know." Many young people were unfamiliar with the word, but even some older respondents also had not heard of it. Tom, a sixty-year old that I interviewed in Mission said, "Chicano, I don't know….someone maybe who lives in the Chicago area of Mexican descent." Tom did not know what the word meant, and guessed that perhaps it referred to Mexican-ancestry persons living in Chicago.

Slang or Words Used Elsewhere

Some respondents who had heard of the term answered that they thought it was a slang term, or a term that was used in other parts of the country. Rebecca, a twenty-three year old in Mission, said, "…to me they are just extra slang words like gringo for White people, or bolillo.[35]" Like Latino, Chicano was also associated with California for some respondents. Those who had traveled to California, remarked that Hispanic people in California call themselves Chicanos.

A Radical, Trouble-making Activist

Several respondents associated the term with activists, particularly activists in California. This was not, however, a positive association for them. Maria was born in California, but moved back to Mexico with her parents when she was five years old. She

[35] Both gringo and bolillo are pejorative slang for Anglos.

then migrated back to the U.S. as an adult, and now lives in Austin. Maria said of the word Chicano/a:

> Maria: It's their word; it's not mine. I would say the Chicano or Chicana is a group of people that decide to call themselves that way, and it started in California. In California—it's pretty much there. To me, I don't like the word. I don't mean to insult anyone, but I would just leave that word.
> *So what does it mean to—what comes to mind when you think about that label?*
> Maria: Those people—how can you say it? They're complainers. They are not happy, and they are a lot of trouble sometimes because they call themselves Chicano or Chicana. You see them in California. You see them out and sometimes the police are looking for them because of their behavior. They get into trouble with the law. Not that they are not some good people. You can be a good person and be a Chicano. I've heard—and a lot of those people you hear them, fighting for this, fighting for that, and they call themselves Chicanos or Chicanas—those people in California.

Maria associated the word with activists in California who are always "fighting for this, fighting for that." Also, notice her references to Chicanos as people who get into trouble with the police, which implies that they are criminals.

Perhaps one of the strongest and most complex reactions that I received regarding the word Chicano was from Irene, a business owner in Del Rio. Irene said:

> Irene: I would throw you out of my house if you called me that [pointing to Chicano]
> *What comes to mind when you thing of Chicano or Chicana?*
> Irene: Chicano. I think of Cesar Chavez. I think of low class, uneducated Mexican Americans. I think of rebellion. I think non-American. And the people that use either one of these words are ignorant. They lack knowledge. Many of us in this area were so discriminated upon and hurt by the Anglo population. They hurt us why? Because they were ignorant, and they lacked the knowledge that their forefathers had come into Mexican land… and the owners were humble peasants, Mexican peasants…on *their* land… because Tejas and Texas was *their* land. I say it not with vengeance or with anger, but a sorrow that I will not live long enough to really talk about it—what is the truth about these lands. Just like we are telling the truth about the American Indians [that] we took their lands. The Americans have

> been abusive to people from day one when they came from Europe. *They* were renegades. The Mexicans weren't renegades. This was *their* land. The Anglo population treated them like dirt. Chicano is an Anglo word as far as I am concerned. It's a slang word. I think we need to be proud to be Americans of Mexican descent and that our culture is a beautiful culture. Because American, the European, Anglo quote unquote have no culture—we do!

Irene associated the term with lower class, uneducated Mexican Americans, and with rebellion. This rebellion she further associates with being "non-American." She views the protests of the farm worker struggles as contradictory to American ideals. People who would use these terms are ignorant. Irene views prejudice in general as always the result of ignorance. Anglos who invaded Texas mistreated the Mexican people because they were ignorant. And to Irene, Chicano is a pejorative word given to Mexican people by Anglos. She believes that Mexican Americans should reject the term, and be proud to be "Americans of Mexican descent." At the end of her remarks, she says that the "American" (Anglo) people have no culture, while "we do." Irene is very critical of "Americans" (Anglos) for their abuse of Mexican people, and for their lack of culture, and yet she rejects "Chicano" in part because she associates it with being "non-American."

Irene's comments indicate her desire to be seen as "American," while at the same time being very critical of what the U.S. has done to the Mexican people. This was a common theme among respondents, and was especially evident in some of the comments regarding the term Chicano. Respondents did identify the term with the Chicano movement, but had internalized such negative images of the word that they could not

identify with the term. As one woman said, "I think about the movement, but I can't consider myself Chicano. To me it's like a slur."

Criminals, Gangsters, Low-riders

The term Chicano was often associated with criminals and gang members for my respondents. Laura, a woman in Del Rio said:

> And Chicano or Chicana, I hate that word. Here, it would be people of very low—no scruples. In other words, not nice people. So, I mean it took me a long time to—it doesn't bother me anymore. If they want to use Chicana, that's fine. But I would never use it, and I wouldn't like for my children to use it either.

For Laura, the word signifies someone who has little integrity, "no scruples." She would not use the word, and would not like to see her children use it because of these negative connotations. Mike, another respondent in Del Rio, said Chicanos are, "Pelados[36], inferior people who do not like to move up, so they take pride in calling themselves that. But they'll never amount to anything." Other words associated with Chicano were "low-rider" and "cholo."

A Word From the Past

For some respondents Chicano was simply an "old term," a word from the past. Diana, a nurse in McAllen said, " Chicano or Chicana, to me that's an old term. I don't hear it as often but I remember back in the late 70's I used to hear it a lot." Isabel, a woman I interviewed in San Antonio said that she remembered the term from, "back in

[36] Literally, pelado means someone who is bald, but the term is used to mean persons who engage in criminal behavior.

the early 70's when I was growing up." She says that she did label herself as Chicana back then because "back in the 70's it was alright." But now Isabel would use Hispanic to identify herself. Teresa, who lives in Del Rio, said, the word Chicano "to me is brown power stuff, and to me that was more like a phase and not something that was permanent." These respondents viewed Chicano as an out-dated label.

Someone Who Has Lost His/Her Identity, Who Has No Pride in His/Her Culture

Another definition that I received for the word Chicano was it described someone who had assimilated, lost his/her identity, and has no pride in being Mexican. Mari had a very strong reaction to the word Chicano:

> Mari: I can't stand that. I just don't think there is such a thing. I mean you're either Mexican or Mexican American, but Chicano! That's like calling someone a spik. Or calling yourself—I mean it's like you've lost your identity. You don't know what you are. There is no such thing as a Chicano in my opinion. You have to be proud of what you are.
>
> *What sorts of things do you associate with it?*
>
> Mari: Very negative. Because Chicanos that call themselves that are people that probably can't find themselves, or they're like hoods. They should be very proud of what they are. They shouldn't be ashamed to speak Spanish. In fact, a lot of these kids don't even speak Spanish. And they should. I mean there is nothing wrong with it. But they just weren't instilled a pride in what they were. So it's not really their fault. But to call themselves Chicanos, that's like demeaning themselves. And people look down on them for it. A lot of people have that feeling about a Chicano.

Mari believes that the word Chicano refers to people who are ashamed of who they are as Mexican Americans. This definition was resounded by many of my interviewees. As one women said, "Chicano and Chicana comes to mind people that have a problem with what they are and who they are."

Term for U.S.-Born Children of Mexicans

This definition was primarily used by immigrants or respondents born in the U.S. but raised in Mexico. These respondents saw the label as a word for Mexican-ancestry persons who were born in the United States. Emilio, a recent immigrant in Del Rio, described the word Chicano as "the American sons of Mexican parents."[37] Luis, who was born in Del Rio but raised in Mexico said, "Pues, (Well), Chicano or Chicana is more for the people that were born over here and live over here and they have their raíces (roots) more from America." A few U.S.-born respondents also mentioned being called "Chicano" by Mexican immigrants, as a way of distinguishing them from immigrants.

Conclusion

Overall, most U.S.-born respondents identified primarily with the terms "Hispanic" and "Mexican American," while immigrants typically preferred "Hispanic" or "Mexican." The word "Mexican" was strongly rejected by the overwhelming majority of U.S.-born respondents that I interviewed who said that the term describes someone born in Mexico. While in the field of Ethnic Studies, the terms Chicano and Latino are viewed as more politically correct and empowering, these terms were rejected by the majority of my interviewees. For most respondents, Latino meant someone from South America, Central America, or the Caribbean, or someone famous in the media—TV, film, and music stars. And Chicano was associated with persons who were rebellious, criminals, or people who have lost pride in their Mexican identity.

[37] Author's translation of original Spanish.

Chapter 6: Just An(other) Shade of White? Making Meaning of Mexican American Whiteness on the Census

"…Even those who live in the most dire circumstances possess a complex and oftentimes contradictory humanity and subjectivity that is never adequately glimpsed by viewing them as victims or, on the other hand, as superhuman agents…Complex personhood means that all people…remember and forget, are beset by contradiction, and recognize and misrecognize themselves and others…Complex personhood means that even those called 'Other' are never never that."[38] – Avery Gordon

Introduction

In *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination,* Avery Gordon examines the ways in which people are "haunted" by memories that are constructed both by their past experience and "what their imaginations are reaching toward" (Gordon 1997, p.4). The stories that people tell about their personal histories are constructed narratives imbued not only with their past circumstances, but with their current desires. There are gaps between the realities of the social structure and the stories that we tell about ourselves, both then and now. These contradictions, the fictions we find in these narratives are worthy of study for the insights they provide. The disconnect between our lived experience and the desire to project some other identity can reveal much about our society, leading to a better understanding of the social structure and our place in it (Gordon 1997).

I began this dissertation with the question, why do Mexican Americans make the racial choices they do? And what are the meanings of these labels? The answers to these questions are complex as the stories my respondents told about their life histories and

[38] Gordon, Avery. 1997. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. p.4

identities were often wrought with contradictions. Sixty-one percent of Mexican Americans in the state of Texas marked their race as "White" in the 2000 census, and yet only one of the fifty-two respondents that I interviewed would ever actually use the term to describe himself in day-to-day life. There is a disconnect between identification as "White" on the census and the reality of the "non-white" racialized identities that my subjects experience. Why would someone mark an identity that does not correspond with who she or he is? What is the meaning of Mexican American Whiteness in the census? And what are the costs of this fiction? In this final chapter, I will summarize my findings regarding Mexican American racial identification in the census, and then move to a discussion of the implications of these findings.

Summary of Research Findings

In this project, I set out to explore the complex and tenuous position of Latinos in the U.S. racial order. Focusing specifically on Mexican Americans, I investigated the meaning of Mexican American "Whiteness" and "Otherness" on the U.S. Census. I began by examining the roots of Mexican American whiteness in the census, exploring how Mexican Americans in the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) constructed White racial identities. LULAC claims credit for the removal of the "Mexican" racial category from the census, following its first and only use in the 1930 census. Using LULAC newsletters, I examined how the organization constructed White racial identities by emphasized their U.S. citizenship and patriotism, and distancing themselves from Mexican immigrants and African Americans.

I then moved to an analysis of 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census data, examining how Mexican Americans currently self-identify racially on the census. I explored what factors are associated with identification as "Other" vs. "White." Results from the national level analysis revealed similar results for 1990 and 2000. Those who marked "White" were more likely to be older, more educated, U.S.-born, living in the Southwest, and are less likely to speak Spanish. Furthermore, compared to Mexican Americans who are unmarried and those married to Hispanics, those who are married to non-Hispanic Whites are more likely to label as "White," while those married to non-Hispanic "Others", Blacks, Asians, and Native Americans are less likely to label as "White." Thus, the results supported most of my hypotheses with the exception of my hypotheses regarding region, income, and the linear relationship between time spent in the U.S. and identification as "White" for immigrants.

While U.S.-born Mexican Americans were more likely than immigrants to identify as "White," recent immigrants (within the last five years) are more likely to identify as "White" than those who immigrated to the U.S. over fifteen years ago. Immigrants who have spent greater lengths of time in the U.S are not more likely to identify as "White" than more recent immigrants. Also, residence in the Southwest, where there is a higher concentration of Mexican-ancestry persons, is associated with higher likelihood of identifying as "White." Finally, the socio-economic variables of income and education yielded different results. While higher education is related to a greater likelihood of identification as "White," higher income is associated with increased likelihood of identification as "Other" until the highest income group. The relationship

between income and identification appears to be curvilinear; those in the lowest income groups and the highest income group were more likely than those in the middle income groups to label as "White." And the lowest income group is actually most likely to identify as "White."

While some of these results corresponded with the assimilation model that racial/ethnic groups "whiten" with increasing socio-economic status and acculturation, the overall picture depicted by these findings is far more complicated. Evidence suggests that while higher levels of education and native-born status are correlated with identification as "White," those in the most vulnerable positions, recent immigrants and those with lower household incomes also may claim a "White" identity.

Following this examination of the data at the national level, I turned my focus to an exploration of these variables at the state level. The states of Texas and California combined contain 66% of the Mexican-ancestry population in the United States. Using 2000 Census data I explored the probability of labeling as "Other" vs. "White" for each state separately. In both Texas and California, persons who were older and more educated were more likely to identify as "White." While results for both age and education yielded similar results for both states, the patterns for gender, income, Spanish language use, and spouse's racial identity differed. Women in Texas were slightly more likely to identify as "White" than men, while there was no relationship between gender and identification in California. In Texas, those with higher incomes were more likely than those with lower incomes to identify as "Other." In contrast, income was only

minimally related to racial identification in California, and in the opposite direction. The highest income group in California was slightly more likely to identify as "White."

The variables Spanish language use, nativity, and spouse's racial identity also yielded different results for these states. In Texas, Spanish was only minimally correlated with checking "Other" (related to an increase in odds of only 5%), while Spanish language use was associated with a 45% increase in the odds of identifying as "Other" in California. In Texas, U.S.-born persons were more likely to identify as "White" than immigrants. In California, on the other hand, persons who immigrated in the last five years were most likely to check "White," while immigrants who had arrived more than fifteen years ago were most likely to identify as "Other." Finally, Mexican Americans married to Anglos were more likely to label as "White" in California, while in Texas they were slightly more likely to label as "Other." Marriage to African Americans and Asians, however, was related to an increase in odds of labeling as "Other" more in Texas than in California. Results suggest that regional context plays a significant role in the racial identification of Mexican Americans. These differences are masked when analyzing at the national level.

Exploring the role of local context in racial identification. I conducted fifty-two in-depth interviews with a diverse sample of Mexican Americans from five locations in Texas, examining how Mexican Americans make racial and ethnic labeling choices. I explored the factors associated with racial choice on the census for my respondents, as well as the meanings and uses of various terms to describe the Mexican ancestry population.

Some researchers have suggested that Latino racial identification on the census is a reflection of phenotype. That is, Latinos marking "White" are lighter-skinned, while more dark-skinned Latinos opt for "Other." The fact that nearly half the Latino population marked "White" for there race would then mean that half of Latinos are light-skinned. Patterson further argues that these "white" Latinos are for all intents and purposes just like the White (Anglo) population (Patterson 2001).

My research directly counters these assertions. I do not find that "White" Latinos are lighter-skinned or that they experience less discrimination. Whiteness does not mean that they either view themselves as White, or that others accept them as White. Rather, whiteness means being "American," as American-ness has historically been constructed as White. Whiteness means not being Black or Indian. It is an identification in opposition to these groups, and as such, is a denial of those races in the bloodlines of Mexican Americans. Whiteness means not being an immigrant, marking oneself as U.S.-born, an American. This explains the prevalence of "White" identification along the border where Mexican Americans find themselves under more scrutiny, as they are confronted with assumptions that they are "Mexican" and not "American."

My results suggest that Mexican American whiteness on the census is neither a reflection of color, nor of acculturation. Rather, whiteness for my respondents was an identity that represented a desire to be seen as simply American—something that their "imagination is reaching toward." This wish, however, was not a reality for most. Many of my interviewees had experienced discrimination. There is a disconnect between what they are answering on the form and their lived experience with racism.

In *Ethnic Options*, Mary Waters (1990) explored the contours of White middle-class "ethnics." Her interviews with sixty White Catholic suburbanites revealed an understanding of ethnicity that was situational and pleasurable for her respondents. Most had not experienced any discrimination on the basis of their ethnic identities as Irish, Italian, or German. Their ethnicity was not a salient part of their lives. They remembered as special phrase of an ancestral language or learned to cook a dish associated with their cultural heritage. These identities surfaced only intermittently and had no social costs or impact on their day-to-day lives. But, Waters argued, there are costs this "costless community" (Waters 1990).

Many of the White ethnics that Waters interviewed compared their ethnic identifications to African Americans and other racialized populations. They related the struggles their Irish or German ancestors had faced with those of racial minorities in U.S. They made no distinction between their experiences with ethnicity and those of African Americans or Latinos. Arguing that because they did not bring their ethnic identity to the office with them, why should an African American or Latino? Waters calls this the real "costs of costless community." That is, while the desire to be ethnic, to be special or unique for these Whites seems harmless, it is detrimental because of the blurred line that occurs between their situational ethnicity and the realities of racialized identities in the United States (Waters 1990).

I would argue that in marking "White" on the form, Mexican Americans endure a great cost—the denial of their identities as racialized subjects. In likening their experience with White ethnics, their history of racialization, of segregation, and racial

discrimination is lost. Many people that I interviewed tended to minimize their experiences with discrimination. Respondents who had given me stories earlier in the interview about racial segregation, tracking in school, or other types of discrimination that they had experienced, later in the interview would deny that they had ever experienced discrimination or been treated differently because of their racial or ethnic background.

Some of this minimizing of encounters with discrimination may be the result of the fact that acts like these are so commonplace that they become unremarkable. That is, they are so a part of everyday life that they are not noteworthy. This is best illustrated by this quote from Adriana, a twenty-three year old secretary in Austin. When I asked her if she had ever been discriminated against she said:

> Yeah, and I think it's just—nothing that I would file a lawsuit over, nothing like that. Maybe I've been lucky in that sense..…But yeah, like when you go into the store, they'll ask somebody else, "Can I help you?" but they won't ask you. Or if you ask for help, they're kind of like [makes a face and gestures with a wave off]. They'll help somebody else first, that sort of thing, that you kind of just don't—you're just not even surprised after a while. You just kind of expect it in a weird way. And you know why people are acting like that.

Adriana notes that because these incidents are so frequent, "you're not even surprised after a while."

Minimizing occurred in several different ways as respondents sometimes answered "no" that they had never experienced discrimination, when they had told me stories earlier in the interview that indicated otherwise. For example, seventy-six year old Mike answered "White" for his race. He grew up on the Mexican side of town in the

barrio of San Felipe in Del Rio. Early in the interview he told me this about his experience at school:

> We were discriminated. We were the only district in the whole nation that was all Mexicans even the coordinators at the school. We were totally segregated – all Mexican. I remember when I joined the service I was completely lost because I was not familiar with the Anglo culture at all. I was really lost.

While Mike had volunteered this information at the beginning of our interview, later when I asked if he had ever experienced discrimination or been treated differently, he replied, "No, I don't think so. Well, maybe when I was growing up. But mostly I try to get along with all different kinds of people." Mike had told me detailed stories of discrimination he had experienced, but when I asked later about discrimination, his immediate reply is "No." He then says, "maybe when I was growing up" and then emphasized that he is able to get along well with different kinds of people. Answering that they had not experienced discrimination or remarking that they were able to get along well with people were some answers I received from respondents like Mike who would later deny or minimize their experiences with racism.

Another way in which respondents minimized their experiences with race was by commenting that everyone experiences some kind of discrimination. Tom, a school administrator in Mission also put "White" on the census. When asked if he had been discriminated against, he replied:

> Yeah, I think everybody has been, regardless of who they are. I've seen Germans discriminate against Jews, and I see Jews discriminate against others. Doesn't make a different what ethnic background you are, you're gonna experience it one way or another.

Tom says that he believes that he has been discriminated against, but that all "ethnic" groups experience this. In this way some of my respondents were actually doing to themselves what the European American subjects of Waters' study did. That is, they are equating their experiences with White European ethnics.

Implications

My research highlights a number of findings relevant to the broader study of racial and ethnic identity formation. First, my results demonstrate how national-level analysis of racial identities may at times mask significant differences in racial and ethnic identification as they vary by region and specific local contexts. Particularly, in the context of Texas, the U.S.-Mexico border has a dramatic impact on the racial labeling practices of Mexican Americans. This finding draws attention to the need for more exploration of role of place in the study of racial identity formation. Second, while research has documented the strategic use of "whiteness" by European Americans, fewer contemporary studies have examined how communities of color deploy "whiteness," and the meanings and consequences of these identifications.

Studies of whiteness by George Lipsitz (1998), David Roediger (2002), and Cheryl Harris (1993) among others have documented the investment in whiteness for European Americans, as an identity that historically and currently confers power and property rights in the United States. Cheryl Harris further extends her argument that Whiteness not only confers property, but is itself property. So even poor Whites cling to it, even while not always reaping monetary or property benefits. They hold a tight grip on

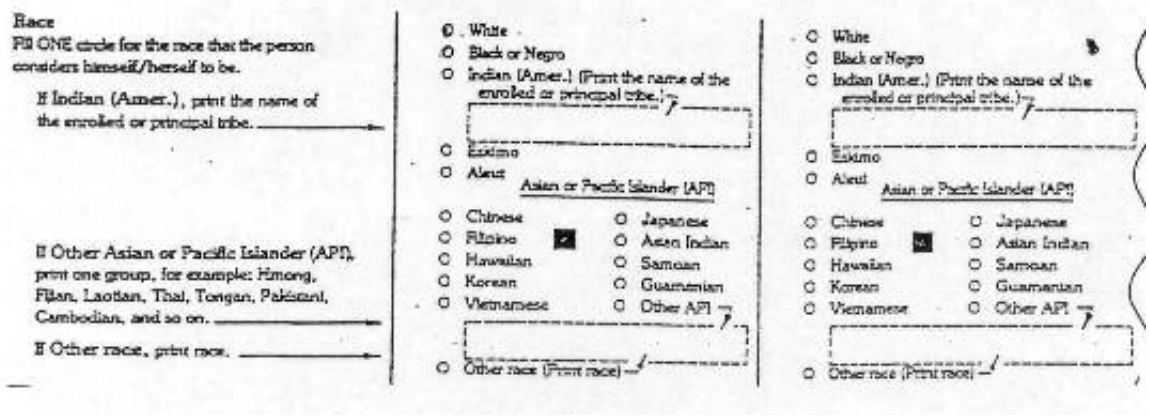
whiteness as it may be the only property that they do have (Harris 1993). One could say that this Mexican American whiteness operates similarly, that those who identified as White cling to Whiteness not in spite of, but because of their lower position in society. However, these White Mexican Americans enjoy little social recognition of this "white" identity. So it becomes quite clear that they do not truly "own" whiteness in that it is not a validated social identification for them.

What are the consequences of this Mexican American Whiteness? First, as "Hispanic" is a salient racialized identity for my respondents, there is this psychological disconnect between what they write on the form and their experiences with racism that serves to deny these experiences of being seen as non-white. This is a denial of the history of the racialization of Mexican Americans. Second, whiteness for my respondents served as a divide between U.S.-born Mexican Americans and immigrants. Third, whiteness distances Latinos from African Americans, Native Americans, and other racialized populations in the U.S., which may hinder coalitions between Latinos and these groups.

Considering the rapid growth of the Latino population in the U.S., how Latinos define themselves in the context of the U.S. racial order has the capacity to dramatically alter the racial composition of the United States over the coming decades. For this reason work on this issue is imperative. As long as Latino "whiteness" is viewed as a sign of their assimilation into the U.S., the persistence of racism in the lives of Latinos will be discounted.

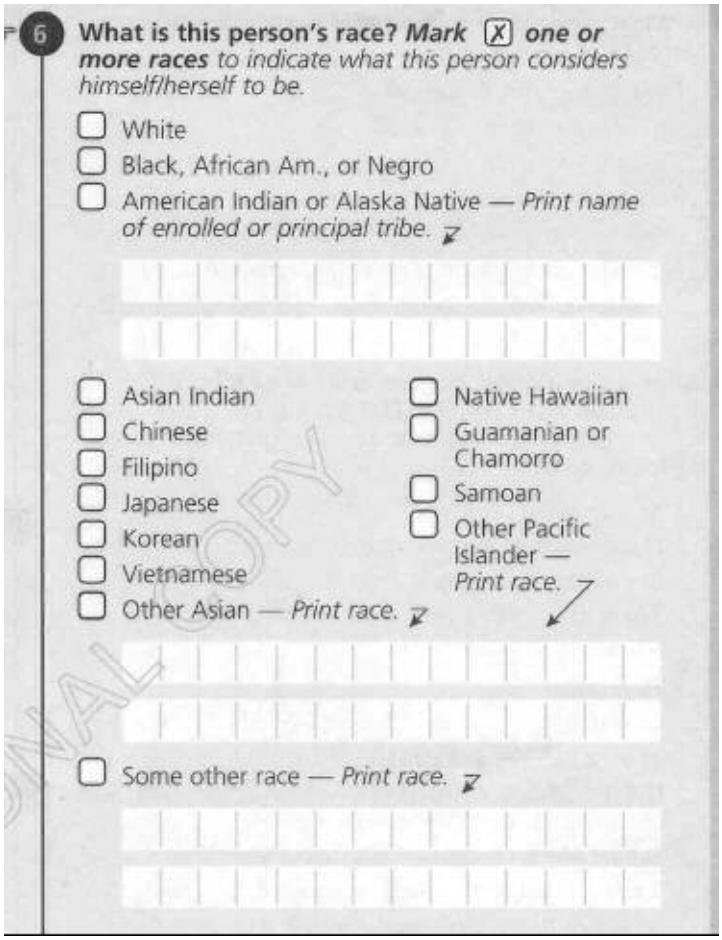
Appendix A

Census 1990 Race Question



Appendix B

Census 2000 Race Question



6 **What is this person's race?** ***Mark*** ☒ ***one or more races*** *to indicate what this person considers himself/herself to be.*

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black, African Am., or Negro
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native — *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe.*
- ☐ Asian Indian
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Filipino
- ☐ Japanese
- ☐ Korean
- ☐ Vietnamese
- ☐ Other Asian — *Print race.*
- ☐ Native Hawaiian
- ☐ Guamanian or Chamorro
- ☐ Samoan
- ☐ Other Pacific Islander — *Print race.*
- ☐ Some other race — *Print race.*

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Vita

Julie Anne Dowling was born in Fort Worth, Texas on June 12, 1975. The daughter of a Mexican American mother from the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas, and an Anglo father, she became interested in themes of racial and ethnic identities from an early age. She attended Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas, where she majored in English and Sociology. After graduating from Southwestern, she began graduate studies in the Department of Sociology at the University of Texas at Austin in the fall of 1997. In 1999, she completed her master's degree exploring racial identity in persons of mixed Mexican-Anglo background.

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